

Israelis charge Arafat advisor

TEL AVIV (DPA) — Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubenstein, filed assault charges Sunday against Ahmad Tibi, an adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Israeli Radio reported. The charges date back to an incident a year ago when Tibi, an Arab Israeli, is alleged to have roughed up and insulted a soldier who demanded to see his identification documents. Tibi has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. He called Sunday's decision "disconcerting" and a case of "political persecution."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرائي.

Prince Abdullah delivers King's message to Qadhafi

TRIPOLI (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Sunday delivered a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi wishing him speedy recovery from a recent surgery. In the message, the King stressed Jordan's support to Libya "against the unfair regulations imposed on the country." King Hussein said the Kingdom will continue efforts to lift the sanctions and wished the Libyan people further progress and prosperity.

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Tarawneh government's popularity rises among opinion-makers, drops among public — CSS poll

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — After one hundred days in office, the government of Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh seems to have gained popularity among opinion-makers, but not among the public at large, an opinion poll released yesterday shows. Figures suggest that the government has been able to partially overcome an initial scepticism registered among the intelligentsia when it was sworn in on Aug. 20. However, the 23-member cabinet appears to have lost some ground among the general public, who judged unsatisfactory measures taken so far by the government in its mandate to fight corruption and nepotism, as well as to reform the public administration, reduce poverty and unemployment. The survey, conducted by

the Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) at the University of Jordan, showed that 26.8 per cent, up from 19.3 in August, of opinion leaders — political analysts, party leaders, labour union and professional association activists, and writers, including journalists and editors — responded that the government is highly capable of meeting its stated mandate. Among the general public, the percentage of respondents believing the government was highly capable stood at 25.4 in August, but went down to 22.7 in late November. The percentage of those who thought the government was fairly capable of shouldering its responsibilities rose in the past four months from 38.1 to 43.4 per cent among the general public, and from 47.8 to 49.6 per cent among opin-

ion leaders.

The percentage of respondents who thought the government was incapable of meeting its mandate went down from six in August to 5.3 per cent in November among the national sample, and from 14.5 to 9.2 per cent among opinion leaders during the same period. Results of the survey, the sixth of its kind carried out by the CSS during the tenure of three successive premiers, reaffirmed that Jordanians hold the prime minister in higher regard than the Cabinet as a whole. Only 20.1 per cent of the national sample and 15 per cent of the opinion leaders believe that the government could collectively manage its responsibilities, while the figures for premier Tarawneh himself were 33 and 38.6 per cent, respectively.

In comparison with the

two previous governments of Prime Ministers Abdul Salam Majali and Abdul Karim Kabariti, Tarawneh's positive popularity trend stands out. When Kabariti was appointed, in Feb. 1996, expectations were very high, with 38 per cent of the average public and 30.1 per cent of the opinion makers considering his government highly capable of meeting the requirements of future stages. But 100 days down the road, in May 1996 — and before the highly unpopular decision taken by his government in August that year to lift state subsidies on bread — the government's popularity rate had already gone down to 32.2 percentage points among the general public and 18.1 among the intellectuals.

(Continued on page 12)



ASIAN GAMES OPEN: Jordanian athletes arrive at the Asian Games opening ceremony on Sunday at the Rajamangala National Stadium in Bangkok. Athletes from 41 countries will take part in the Games, which are billed as the last great sports festival of the century. The competition runs through December 20 (see sports pages) (AFP photo)

U.N. secretary general says 'well on way' to ending Lockerbie dispute

ABU DHABI (R) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Sunday he believed the long-running dispute over the trial of suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jumbo jet over Scotland was well on the way to being settled. A U.N. statement issued in Abu Dhabi, after Annan's arrival here to address a Gulf Arab summit on Monday, said he had spoken to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright from the plane on his way to the capital of the United Arab Emirates. "The secretary general shared with the U.S. secretary of state the nature of his talks with the Libyans. He stated that he had 'fruitful and positive discussions' with the Libyans," said the statement, sent to Reuters. "We are well on the way to resolving the problem,"

the statement quoted Annan as saying. "The secretary general stated that the Libyans have their own way of consulting with their reality and they would determine how to consult their people for a decision on the Lockerbie issue and the way to announce it," the statement said. Annan had said after his Saturday meeting with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi that he hoped for "good news" soon, but said Libya's complex decision-making process meant a final agreement needed more time. The Libyan Foreign Ministry said on Sunday it believed a deal to settle the issue was closer after the talks with Annan. The United States and Britain are pressing for the surrender of two alleged Libyan intelligence agents

accused of blowing up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, killing 270 people. Tripoli's refusal to hand over the suspects, on the ground that they would not receive a fair trial in Scotland or the United States, led to the imposition of U.N. sanctions against Tripoli in 1992. Libya, backed by the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity, has since agreed to let the two, Abdul Basset Ali Mohammed Al Megrahi and Lamien Khalifa Fhimah, stand trial before Scottish judges sitting on neutral territory in the Netherlands. The United States and Britain agreed in August to a trial in the Netherlands and are keen to see the two men handed over before the Dec. 21 anniversary of the bombing. A Libyan official said earlier on Sunday he expected a lengthy parliamentary debate on the possible handover of the two suspects, following Annan's intervention in the dispute. Libya's General People's Congress is due to start a five-day session on Tuesday. The United States said it was disappointed at the failure to agree a clear-cut agreement on the handover of the two Libyans. Libya's main objection since the site of the trial was agreed has been to U.S. and British demands that, if convicted, the two should serve their prison sentences in Scotland. Tripoli wants any jail sentence to be served in the Netherlands or Libya, but Washington and London have said this issue is not negotiable.

Netanyahu blames Arafat for attacks

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday accused the Palestinian National Authority of fomenting violent protests in the West Bank. At least two Palestinians were injured Sunday when demonstrators threw stones at Israeli troops outside the Jewish settlement of Ariel in the northern West Bank, and the soldiers responded with rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas. A day earlier, 27 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers were injured in similar clashes throughout the West Bank. The protests, coupled with a hunger strike by hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, grew out of an increasingly bitter dispute over Palestinian prisoners to be released under the land-for-peace accord.

Under it, Israel is to release 750 Palestinian prisoners. It freed 250 of them last month, but most were criminals. The Palestinians want so-called security prisoners — those being held for anti-Israeli activities — to be released instead. Netanyahu on Sunday demanded the Palestinian National Authority stop encouraging violent protests and instead clamp down on them. The Palestinian Authority stands behind the inflaming of the demonstrations and the hunger strikes, the prime minister said during a cabinet meeting, according to official minutes. "The Palestinians have been asked to stop the violence and implement to violence," Ahmad Tibi, a top aide to Arafat, denied the Palestinian National Authority had any "work plan" to encourage the protests. The latest angry exchange on the prisoner issue came only six days before President Clinton was slated to arrive for a three-day visit to try to help move along implementation of the peace accord.

The Israeli government has threatened to hold up its promised withdrawal from another 5 per cent of the West Bank over the dispute, but Washington has said the pullback should proceed as scheduled. Even some on the Israeli side acknowledged that steps were needed to address Palestinian anger over the prisoners. Gidon Ezra, a member of the Netanyahu's Likud Party and

former deputy chief of the Shin Bet intelligence, Gidon Ezra, called on the prime minister to release Palestinian prisoners over the age of 45 who have served at least 20 years. "We need, somehow, to show them the light at the end of the tunnel," Ezra told Israeli Radio. On other issues, Netanyahu called on Arafat to begin inviting members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, to next week's meeting in Gaza. Most of the more than 500 members of the PNC live abroad. At the Gaza gathering, in Clinton's presence, the Palestinians are to reaffirm the nullification of clauses in their national charter calling for Israel's destruction. Israel has also demanded that the PNC hold an actual vote rather than simply proclaiming the charter changed, but the Palestinians on Sunday repeated their objections to that. "They haven't the right to give us instructions," Arafat said in response upon his arrival in Gaza Sunday from a European trip. Meanwhile, Ahmad Qureia, speaker of the Palestinian parliament, warned of more violence if Israel continues to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where the Palestinians hope to establish a future state. "If settlement activity continues, then all means of resistance are open," Qureia told reporters in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Settlers have established makeshift communities on several West Bank hillsides since the Wye accord was signed in October, in a bid to keep the land from being turned over to the Palestinians. Netanyahu repeated another demand Sunday: that Arafat refrain from threatening to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999, after the expiration of the Oslo interim peace accord. The Palestinian president has said he has a right to declare statehood in the absence of any negotiated agreement. But he said Saturday in Sweden that Israel and the new Palestinian entity should co-exist "by mutual agreement and acceptance."

Palestinian police launch illegal arms campaign

GAZA (R) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Sunday announced the launch of a police campaign to round up unlicensed and illegal weapons in all Palestinian self-rule areas as required under a new peace deal with Israel. "The 15-day ultimatum for people to hand over their unlicensed weapons is over and starting today we will begin organising campaigns to collect illegal weapons," Brigadier-General Mahmoud Asfour told Reuters. The land-for-security deal which Israel and the PNA signed in Oct. 23 called on the Palestinians to establish a legal framework criminalising unlicensed arms and to confiscate illegal weapons. Asfour said that many people had handed over weapons during the past two weeks and that others had applied for licences to legalise personal arms. He declined to specify estimates of how many unlicensed weapons were circulating in Palestinian areas. "People who asked for licences had to meet several conditions, their applications had to be studied carefully and legally before a licence could be approved," he added.

The weapons campaign was announced to the public Sunday in front page advertisements in three local newspapers in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian Police Chief Ghazi Jabali said violators would be punished under a Palestinian weapons law imposing a maximum three-year jail term and top fine equivalent to around \$7,500 on offenders. "From now on, whoever is caught will be interrogated and sent to trial," Asfour said. Asfour added that police would not carry out house-to-house campaigns to search for illegal weapons but would exclusively rely on "accurate and previous information."

"After we receive the information we will ask for permission from the attorney general's office to go in the suspected house to look for the unlicensed weapon," he said. The Wye River interim peace deal provides for Israel to withdraw its troops from another 13 per cent of the West Bank in three stages over three months in exchange for precise Palestinian security steps and political moves. Israel carried out the first staged land transfer on November 20.

Levy says won't join Israeli government

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Former Foreign Minister David Levy said on Sunday he had decided against rejoining Israel's fragile coalition government and accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of deception in trying to woo him back. In a statement carried by Israel Radio, Levy appeared to be angry over what he considered Netanyahu's backtracking on a purported promise to appoint him finance minister. "I have reached the inevitable conclusion that the prime minister's offer was a sham," Levy said, accusing Netanyahu's confidants of spreading rumours that the Israeli leader did not intend to abide by a verbal deal to give him the portfolio. "As a result of these seri-

ous circumstances, I have decided no longer to deal with this matter, which now has no real substance, and I will not join this government."

In a statement, Netanyahu's office said efforts would continue to bring Levy back into the fold. "The prime minister believes that Levy, with his experience, could contribute to the government and assist it, especially during this period," it said. Levy, a self-declared champion of the working class, took his five-member Geshar movement out of the government in January, accusing Netanyahu of moving too slowly on peace and failing to help low-income groups. Netanyahu wants to strengthen a right-wing

government deeply divided over the U.S.-brokered land-for-security deal he signed with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at the White House in October. But the prospects of a free-spending Levy taking over from the cautious Yacov Neeman at the finance ministry has alarmed Israeli markets. Shares on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange dipped last week after it appeared Neeman was on the way out. They rose on Sunday on speculation Levy would not replace him. Despite opposition from key coalition partners to the Wye River deal, Netanyahu has remained in power with the help of the left-centre Labour Party which wants to see the interim accord carried out during the three

Ocalan says ready to stand trial in international court

BONN (R) — Turkey's most wanted man, the rebel Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, said on Sunday he was prepared to stand trial in front of an international tribunal. The PKK leader is at the centre of an extradition row involving Germany, Italy and Turkey. He is wanted for treason in Turkey for leading a bloody rebellion for Kur-

dish home rule. "I am ready to go in front of an international tribunal, made up of independent judges, to see whether we or the Turkish government are responsible for the escalation of armed conflict which has led to thousands of deaths on both sides," he said. Ankara wants Italy,

which arrested Ocalan at Rome airport last month, to send him back to Turkey to face trial over the rebellion in which 29,000 people have died since the mid 1980s. Turkey has vociferously opposed the idea of an international trial. It fears that a European court could call into ques-

tion Ankara's policies in its 14-year struggle with the PKK, which is fighting for self-rule in the south-east of the country. Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem said in Rome on Saturday that such a trial would "simply become a forum to politicise the case."

Italy says its constitution forbids extraditing Ocalan because he could face the death penalty. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder shot down the next-best solution for Italy and Turkey when he said he would not seek to extradite Ocalan to face charges of inciting his followers in Germany to murder.

High turnout as Turkish Cypriots elect new parliament

ANKARA (DPA) — Turnout was reportedly high Sunday as Turkish Cypriots went to the polls to elect a new 50-seat parliament for their breakaway state in the north of the divided Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

The Anadolu news agency said that a high percentage of more than 120,000 voters turned out for the polling which began early in the morning and ended at 6 p.m. local time.

The agency quoted police as saying that no serious

incident occurred during the elections in which Turkish Cypriotes had a choice of 352 candidates from seven parties.

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş Sunday renewed his call for international recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which has only been recognised by Turkey since its establishment in 1983.

"These elections are sufficient to prove our existence, our democratic institutions

and that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is not a fabrication," Denktaş was quoted as saying by Anadolu news agency while casting his vote.

The Turkish Cypriot leader called on the public to respect the results of the election. "Our duty is to accept the results and help the government to be set up," he added.

Anadolu said that unofficial results would not be announced until early Monday because of a complex

system of proportional representation which is being used for the first time.

As parliament has only an advisory role in foreign policy, the elections are not expected to spell a major change in Turkish Cyprus' Ankara-dependent stance on the long-running sovereignty issue on the island.

Cyprus has been divided into a Turkish community in the north and a Greek one in the south since the 1974 Turkish intervention after an Athens-backed coup.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Moratinos arrives Tuesday

AMMAN (Petra) — European Union envoy Miguel Moratinos arrives here Tuesday on a three-day official visit for talks with senior Jordanian officials. His talks will touch upon the Middle East peace process and the latest developments in the region.

Tarawneh meets with Kaabneh

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Fayez Tarawneh on Sunday visited the headquarters of the Jordan Armed Forces. He was received by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirza Kaabneh. Tarawneh and Field Marshal Kaabneh discussed issues of concern to the armed forces.

Lawzi meets with British official

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Nasser Lawzi yesterday held talks with visiting British under-secretary of state at the Department of Environment, Transport, and the Regions, Alan Meale. Lawzi briefed Meale on Jordan's experience in public and private sector partnership as well as the government's endeavours to organise the transport sector.

Majali, Judeh discuss parliamentary issues

AMMAN (Petra) — The new speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Abdul Hadi Majali, met Sunday with Information Minister Nasser Judeh for talks on the House's continued cooperation with the official and public media. Majali said the House is keen on allowing the media to cover its sessions and expressed hope that close cooperation between the two institutions would further enhance the democratic process and parliamentary life in the country. Judeh, who congratulated Majali on his election to the speakership, reaffirmed the media's readiness to cover House deliberations and help Parliament in its endeavours. Majali and Judeh reviewed a number of issues connected with parliamentary work.

Turkish demonstrators released

ANKARA (DPA) — Police in the north-western Anatolian province of Bursa on Sunday released 111 demonstrators detained a day earlier for protesting against Turkey's dress code. The Anadolu news agency said. The report said that charges would be brought against 70 of them for violating the law covering demonstrations and gatherings. The demonstrators, most of them university students, were arrested on Saturday after they ignored police calls to disperse.

'Iran's Khatami to visit Saudi Arabia'

RIYADH (R) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami is expected to visit Saudi Arabia in the next three months in response to an invitation by King Fahd. Iran's ambassador in Riyadh said on Sunday. "His Highness King Fahd issued an invitation to President Mohammad Khatami. He [Khatami] accepted and is expected to visit the kingdom of Saudi Arabia within three months," Ambassador Reza Nouri told Reuters. Iranian-Saudi relations, soured after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution toppled the pro-Western shah, have been improving since the reformist Khatami was elected last year. He advocates closer ties with Iran's Arab neighbours. Senior officials from both sides have exchanged visits, including Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah who last December travelled to Tehran to attend the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit. Reza said Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan was also expected to visit Tehran after the Holy Month of Ramadan, which begins later in December.

Algeria prime minister's speech in parliament marred by scuffle

ALGIERS (R) — A fist-fight overshadowed Algerian Prime Minister Ahmad Ouyahia's appearance in a tense parliament on Sunday when he defended his government's two-year-long record in office.

Scores of deputies booed Ouyahia when he started his speech by saying that Algeria was about to wipe out Muslim guerrillas.

"Each day a massacre occurs and you are still repeating such statements," shouted one parliamentarian amid a stream of insults traded between the premier's supporters and opponents.

Algeria is mired in a savage hit-and-run war between the military and Islamic guerrillas in which thousands of people, mostly civilians, have died.

One deputy from the main ruling National Democratic Rally (RND) exchanged blows with a deputy from the National Liberation Front (FLN), a junior government partner.

The scuffle threw the session into confusion as other parliamentarians from both sides tried to calm the situation.

Parliament Speaker Abdul Kader Ben Salah was heard ordering a brief recess.

But Ouyahia continued his

speech, broadcast live on state-run television, going on to outline his government's achievement in taming inflation and broadening the country's foreign currency reserves.

Ouyahia said inflation fell to 6 per cent in 1997 from 19 per cent in 1996. He said he expected an inflation rate of five per cent in 1998.

He gave no figure for the amount of currency reserves but official data showed that the government expected that amount to fall to some \$7.5 billion at the end of the year from \$9 billion because of a slump in crude oil prices.

Oil and gas account for more than 95 per cent of the value of Algeria's total exports.

"Even if oil average falls to \$12 per barrel, Algeria is cushioned against oil price fall, even at the level of \$12 per barrel the country will be able to pay back its debts and cover its imports between 1998 and 2000," said Ouyahia.

He acknowledged that the economic crisis was hitting Algerians hard, saying 380,000 workers had lost their jobs following the shutting of some 1,000 ailing state-owned companies in 1997 and 1998.



An elderly man Sunday displays bloodied pillows and a hoe that he claims was used by terrorists to kill members of his family in a massacre in the Tadjana hamlet in the coastal province of Tipaza, 60 kms west of Algiers (Reuters photo)

'Rebels kill nine Algerians'

ALGIERS (R) — Suspected Islamist rebels slashed the throats of nine villagers in an Algerian hamlet overnight, government security officials said on Sunday.

The officials told Reuters that rebels killed three children, three women and three men and wounded six others in the massacre at Tadjana hamlet in the coastal province of Tipaza, 60 kilometres west of Algiers.

The senior security offi-

cials, who asked not to be named, said the carnage took place at about 3 a.m. on Sunday, adding the attackers also abducted seven girls from three houses.

Earlier, the government said in a statement carried by the official Algerian news agency APS that seven people were killed and five wounded.

The statement blamed Islamist rebels for the attack. The overnight massacre brought to more than 60 the

number of people killed in the past six days of violence in Algeria.

In the past four years there has been an upsurge of violence leading up to and during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The fasting month will be observed during the second half of December, depending on the sight of the moon.

Muslim rebels consider Ramadan an auspicious period in the "holy war" against the government.

Donor countries announce pledges of \$68.5 million to UNRWA

AMMAN (J.T.) — Pledges of contributions worth about \$68.5 million towards the 1999 financial needs of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Near East were announced Thursday at the annual Pledging Conference for UNRWA, held at United Nations headquarters in New York, an UNRWA statement said.

Twenty-six delegations spoke and 18 announced pledges at the conference, which was opened by the current president of the General Assembly, Foreign Minister Didier Operti of

Uruguay. The commissioner general of UNRWA, Peter Hansen, also addressed the meeting. The observer of Palestine also made a statement.

The biggest pledges announced for 1999 were from Sweden (150 million krona, or about \$18.4 million) and Norway (100 million Norwegian kroner, or about \$13.3 million). Japan said it would contribute \$10.24 million in this fiscal year, while Denmark pledged 60 million kroner (about \$9.24 million). The Netherlands announced a pledge worth some \$5.7 million. Switzerland pledged \$5.5 million and Spain announced a pledge

of some \$3.4 million. Belgium pledged nearly \$682,000 and the United Arab Emirates pledged \$500,000.

Other countries announcing pledges at the conference were: Greece, Austria, Turkey, Luxembourg, China, Thailand, Portugal, Malaysia and Tunisia. Countries making their pledges to UNRWA in writing or who had announced their pledges earlier were the Czech Republic, Egypt, India, Monaco, Chile and Colombia.

Five of UNRWA's traditional major donor countries — Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and

the United States — spoke at the conference in support of UNRWA's work but where not in a position to pledge at this time due to pending parliamentary or budgetary procedures. All representatives of the European Commission (EC) also spoke at the meeting and referred to ongoing negotiations on a new three-year convention between UNRWA and the EC.

Pledges made or promised at Thursday's meeting will go towards UNRWA's regular budget requirements of \$322 million for 1999. The main provider of education, health care, relief services and social pro-

grammes for 3.5 million registered Palestine refugees, UNRWA is financed almost entirely by voluntary contributions from the international community. The agency has faced chronic shortfalls in funding in recent years, as the numbers and needs of the refugee population have grown, said the statement.

In his opening statement, Hansen said, the refugees "cannot survive on a mandate alone." The greatest risk they faced, he said, was not the untimely discontinuation of UNRWA but the "slow bleeding of the vital programmes which the agency delivers."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10Cartoon — Batman
15:30David Copper Field
16:00Drama — Neighbours
16:30Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
17:00Thalassa
18:15Drama — Wind at My Back
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:33Parenthood
20:00Doc. — The Internet Cafe
20:30Drama — Big Sky
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30Drama — The Fix
23:30Comedy — Keeping Up
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:56Fajr
06:18(Sunrise) Duha
11:27Dhuhr
14:13Asr
16:36Maghreb
17:58Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624390
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624833/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

Church Tel. 4771751

Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Warm weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming relatively cool at night with clouds appearing at different altitudes

and winds southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, moderate to warm weather conditions will prevail, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman10/23
Aqaba14/28
Deserts09/25
Jordan Valley16/29

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 21 Aqaba 27 Humidity
readings: Amman 37 per cent,
Aqaba 33 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun10/19
Jerash12/24
Um Qays12/23
Madaba10/22
Petra12/22
Dead Sea16/29

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad.....5346070
Dr. Khalid Abdo.....4657129
Dr. Bassam Karadshah.....4389200
Dr. Khalid Madi.....5661144

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5337004
Rokn Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh.....(02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi.....(09)903469
Palestine Pharmacy(09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4657777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Jordan Hospital.....5607580
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic Police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints: 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre.....5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....4644281/6
Akileh Maternity.....4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity.....4642362
Malhas, J. Amman.....4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607580
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5661646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4771013
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Televist.....4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.....4636381
RJ Flight Information.....44-53300
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53300

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:30Sanaa (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:35Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:30Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)
00:15Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
01:25Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
10:30Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:15Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
21:20Damascus (RJ)
22:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:00Tehran (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)
22:45Abu Dhabi (RJ)

Other Flights

06:30Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:30Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
22:25Amsterdam (KL)
01:25Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

09:30Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
10:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

SIGNING CER

"Signing ceremony of the 1st Arab Artists at Darat Al Fann, Ja. Dec. 8 at 6 p.m."

LECTUR

"The Contemporary Arab Artist: A Journey from Tradition to the Present" by Hani Hourani at the Royal Cultural Centre, Amman, until Dec. 14.

EXHIBIT

"Photography exhibition by Arab Artists at Darat Al Fann, Ja. Dec. 8 at 6 p.m."

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

"The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Arab Artists at Darat Al Fann, Ja. Dec. 8 at 6 p.m."

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

07:00Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

Home

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what's go

FILM

Annual CE

SIGNING CER

LECTUR

EXHIBIT

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

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PRINCESS AISHA ATTENDS CEREMONY: HRH Princess Aisha on Sunday presents an award to a graduate of a People's Army course at a ceremony marking His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday (Petra photo)

'World Bank may guarantee \$730 million in loans for water project'

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government Sunday said the World Bank appeared willing to guarantee \$730 million in loans to be obtained from commercial banks to help finance the Disi-Amman water project.

Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki said a recent World Bank report on the Middle East and North Africa indicated that the international body might help guarantee the loans.

Mulki gave no further details on the recipients of the loans, but other officials said the government had not yet received a formal notification from the World Bank on the gesture.

"The WB, in its recent report, acknowledged the Disi project and said it is willing to guarantee the funds. This is a milestone that the plan has been submitted from being on paper to the implementation stage," Mulki said yesterday at the opening of a one-day seminar on water issues held with the participation of a 14-member international delegation.

Alan Mulki, parliamentary undersecretary of state at the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, headed the delegation, which repre-

sents nine top British water companies.

Last October, the government solicited around 51 local, Arab and foreign firms to pre-qualify for the project on a build, operate and transfer basis to draw water to Amman from the 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer in the south of the country. It said it was seeking to appoint a consortium to finance, construct and manage the project in a joint venture arrangement with a Jordanian public shareholding company.

The Disi-Amman conveyance system will be transferred to the government after 20 years. It will entail drilling wells, building a pumping station and a 325-kilometre water pipeline from the Disi aquifer that will deliver 100 million cubic metres (mcm) a year to the capital by 2005.

Amman, home to almost half of the Kingdom's 4.5 million population, has had to bear a water rationing programme almost every summer for the last 10 years.

During the seminar, which aimed at activating the private sector's role in the water sector, Mulki noted that the country's population, increasing by 3.5 per cent annually, will need 1.2 billion cubic metres of water

per year between 1998 and 2000. The Kingdom's current water resources only amount to 960 million cubic metres a year.

He told the workshop, which reviewed the British experience in privatising the water and wastewater treatment sectors and highlighted investment opportunities, that the water deficit, projected to grow to 250mcm by 2010 from 220mcm in 1995, is being covered through the use of groundwater resources, some non-renewable, at over 200 per cent of their safe yields.

Around 50mcm from the Disi aquifer is being used for agriculture by four privately-owned farms free of charge under a 25-year concession agreement granted by the government in 1985. Another 14mcm is extracted from the aquifer, which is also used by Saudi Arabia and Israel, for domestic purposes in Aqaba. Water experts say the aquifer is already over-exploited, with an annual drop of 80-85 centimetres in its level. They are also worried about pollution of the non-renewable aquifer and stress that agricultural use in the area must stop.

At the beginning of the discussions, which were followed

by a series of meetings on partnership between the public and private sectors, wastewater recycling and treatment, and operations and management. Mulki said the ministry adopted a water strategy, a water utilisation policy and an investment programme for 1997-2011 in which it identified 61 projects at a total cost of nearly \$5 billion.

The schemes' objectives include managing and treating wastewater for reuse, expanding wastewater services to cover 60 per cent of the population, involving the private sector in management, and replacing worn-out water networks to help reduce water losses.

Two months ago, the ministry announced that a four-year contract would be given to a private operator that will be responsible for distribution, maintenance, meter-reading, billing and collection services in Amman.

Mulki said that in order to meet upcoming challenges posed by the Middle East's water situation in the fields of politics, economy and environment, regional cooperation and establishing a balance between supply and demand are a must.

Amnesty representative meets with relatives of prisoners in Syria

Al on fact-finding mission to determine number, status of Jordanians imprisoned

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — A representative of Amnesty International on Sunday met with relatives of some Jordanian detainees in Syria as part of a fact-finding mission launched by the organisation to determine the status of these prisoners.

Abdul Salam Ahmad, who arrived here on Thursday, said he also met with government officials, including Foreign Ministry Secretary General Nabil Shouqum, to obtain information about these detainees.

Ahmad told the Jordan Times that the London-based watchdog organisation did not have enough information about the number of Jordanians held in Syria. Government officials have put the number as exceeding 300 detainees.

"We raised this issue with

the Syrian government during previous visits to Damascus," Ahmad said. "In some cases, we managed to get some answers about our queries."

"Our main concern includes not only Jordanian detainees in Syria, but also Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, for whom we work hard to ensure that they receive a fair trial," Ahmad said.

"We do care that the civil and political rights of these people are not abused," he added. Ahmad declined to give further details.

He pointed out that although Amnesty was not able to visit Syrian jails in the past, the International Committee of the Red Cross was allowed to conduct such visits.

Ahmad said he will submit a report to his organisation, based on the testimonies of

relatives of detainees.

The issue of Jordanian detainees in Syrian jails has led to a worsening of relations between the two countries, which cooled following Syria's repeated criticism of Jordan's peace treaty with Israel.

The Kingdom has said many Jordanians went "missing" in Syria for unspecified reasons and urged Damascus to release them and ensure fair trial for those charged by Syrian security agencies.

Imad Sharqawi, head of a Jordanian committee that is spearheading the campaign to release the prisoners, said his group has started an "international" campaign to ensure the release of all those held in Syria.

Sharqawi said other foreign groups will visit the Kingdom in the coming few weeks as part of this cam-

paign.

He added that information available to his group indicates that at least 420 Jordanians are being held in Syria or are missing there.

Sharqawi, a lawyer, said delegations representing relatives of these prisoners will tour some European countries to lobby for their release.

He added that families of these prisoners possess enough evidence that their kin are being held in Syrian jails.

On October, families and relatives of the detainees staged a sit-in near the Parliament building to press for the release of their kin.

Last month, the Syrian government released Musa Karasneh, a Jordanian citizen working with the Cities and Villages Development Bank, following five months in detention.



PRINCESS SUMAYA OPENS EXPO: Deputising for Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, HRH Princess Sumaya on Sunday inaugurates a Young Muslim Women's Association exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre. HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid also attended the opening ceremony. The exhibition was organised on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday. On display are embroideries and wooden handicrafts (Petra photo)

Government approves amendments to controversial audio/visual regulations

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The government has approved several amendments to audio/visual regulations introduced in June that many producers and artists had said would force them to close down their businesses.

Iyad Qattan, director of the Press and Publications Department, yesterday said the amendments will remove the "double censorship" applied to dubbed series and documentaries as well as educational and training programmes for computer and investment companies. They will also reduce the fee for importing laser discs from JD25 per unit to JD3, he said.

"The fees imposed on cinema tapes will remain the same, JD50, for commercial reasons," Qattan added.

The June regulations required companies to have products censored twice: first when they enter the country and again before being export-

ed to other markets.

Producers and artists argued that the regulations would make them lose more than they stood to gain from working in Jordan. They also said most of the dubbing done in Jordan was intended for airing outside the country, resulting in Jordan's censorship laws being forced on foreign parties.

The Cabinet decision approved recommendations submitted by the PPD in October. They are expected to be endorsed by a Royal Decree and become effective within 10 days, Qattan said.

Television producers reacted cautiously to the amendments, saying that it was premature to decide whether the new regulations met their expectations or not.

"When we read the amendments, we will decide on which side of the river we stand," Bassam Hijawi, a television producer, said. But he added that "we welcome any

amendments to the old regulations because any change is better than nothing."

Many in the industry said the six-month-old regulations, which required producers to pay fees ranging from JD1 to JD100 for the PPD to censor and license audio/visual products, dealt a heavy blow to production houses working on dubbing TV series into Arabic.

Qattan said he also considered the June regulations as a setback for the TV industry.

"The previous regulations required too many fees for television production and did not correspond to the size of the market and its demands," said Qattan.

Qattan told the Jordan Times that the regulations drove away many local and Arab investors who wanted to invest in the industry.

According to one producer, the dubbing industry employs around 15,000 Jordanians, including actors and technicians.

Jordanian-Egyptian committee meeting opens Thursday

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Joint Committee is expected to sign 18 agreements, including one on the establishment of a joint trade and industrial council, during its two-day meeting in Amman, which begins on Thursday.

A statement from the Ministry of Industry and Trade on Sunday said the two sides will conclude accords on cooperation in the fields of oil and energy, fisheries, technology and science, and administrative development, in addition to agreements on investment in health as well as tourism and cultural cooperation covering the years 1999-2001.

The higher committee meeting, which will be co-chaired by the Jordanian and Egyptian prime ministers, Fayez Tarawneh and Kamal Jazouli, will be preceded by a ministerial and technical committee meeting on Wednesday to prepare for the Dec. 15 meeting. According to the statement, the preparatory committee will be co-chaired by Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammad Saleh Hourani and Egyptian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Zafer Bushra.

Jordanian Ambassador to Egypt Trad Fayez said the two prime ministers are also sched-

uled to discuss the Middle East peace process, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli track, and the implementation of the Wye River accord.

Fayez said the two sides will discuss arrangements to mark the linkage of the Jordanian and Egyptian national power grids. He said the inauguration of the linkage, which was due to be held during the higher committee meeting in Amman, has been delayed.

The project will be inaugurated at a ceremony to be attended by His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at a later date, he added.

New House speaker requests responses to deputies' queries

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Reasserting the Lower House of Parliament's authority and its role as a "watchdog" over the government, new House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali yesterday asked the Cabinet to send replies to deputies' queries within eight days as stipulated by the House's internal regulations.

Most present and past ministers, however, have occasionally overlooked the item and have placed such questions on the backburner. Some of these questions are highly sensitive, while others of a less urgent nature tackling day-to-day issues and concerns of lawmakers' constituencies.

During yesterday's session, Deputy Hashem Waked asked Health Minister Nael Ajlouni about the results of laboratory tests on D&T vaccines given to more than 25,000 students in September.

The national vaccination campaign was interrupted after over six hundred students complained of high fever, headache, dizziness and nausea.

"The Health Ministry stressed that test results were satisfactory," the Balqa deputy said. "So then why were there so many cases that were sent to hospitals?"

"How can the ministry risk thousands of lives?" he asked. Ajlouni reiterated that the results of the tests conducted on samples of the vaccines by the World Health Organisation showed that there was "nothing wrong with the vaccines."

He said test results proved that the vaccines were fit for use and concluded that the inoculation, storage, refrigeration and conservation procedures were all adequate.

The minister added that a special committee of experts from the Health Ministry, the Royal Medical Services, university hospitals, the private sector and the WHO "reviewed all paediatric reports on the cases of the students who complained of symptoms and concluded that not one single case required hospitalisation."

The Lower House of Parliament on Sunday finalised a reply to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, at the opening session of Parliament last week. The Lower House will present the reply to the Crown Prince on Wednesday.

what's going on

FILM

* "Devil's Advocate" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman on Tuesday Dec. 8 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel.: 4650457)

* "Le femme infidèle" at the French Cultural Centre at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

ANNUAL CHOIR

* Annual Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) choir at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (daily until Dec. 10).

SIGNING CEREMONY

* Signing ceremony of the book "The Horizon of Changes in Arabic Novels" issued by Darat Al Funun, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Tuesday Dec. 8 at 6:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "The Contemporary Problems of International Trade Arbitration" (in Arabic) by Dr. Omayya Olwan at the Applied Science University (Time of lecture to be checked at the university).

EXHIBITIONS

* Photography exhibition "Empreintes" (a photographic trip from Morocco to Turkey) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 17.

* Works of 17 British artists and painters from the Nineteenth Century at the British Council, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* Oil paintings by Ali Najjar at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 14.

* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel.: 4643251/2, until Jan. 28).

* Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'No plans to lease satellite station'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Information Minister Nasser Judeh on Sunday dismissed speculation that the government was planning to lease Jordan's only national satellite station. During yesterday's Parliament session, Judeh, in reply to a question from Deputy Ahmad Abbadi, said the Jordanian Arab Satellite Station "will not be rented out because it is a state-owned centre." Commenting on a recent agreement signed by the government and the Arab Media Investment Company, which publishes Al Aswaq newspaper, to operate the station, Judeh said a memorandum of understanding was signed with the firm to operate and manage the station in accordance with JTV's internal regulations. "The preliminary memo is not binding. It is considered a first step towards involving the private sector in the media," the minister stressed. Local newspapers reported that the JD5 million company recently started to increase its capital and restructure in order to operate the station.

1999 Jordan Diary available

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Press Office of the Royal Court has launched the 1999 Jordan Diary, a desktop agenda with updated information on the country's history, culture, economy, and tourism sites. Part I of the Diary, including a chapter on Jordan's geography and the environment, also features information on the Hashemites, the Islamic faith, and ethnic and religious groups forming Jordan's diverse population. Over 20 colour photographs featuring the natural, touristic, archaeological and human richness of the country conclude the first part of the 1999 Diary, the third annual edition. In addition to maps of the world and the most important capitals, and detailed maps of the Kingdom, the 1999 Jordan Diary also features a comprehensive reference directory of useful contact names and numbers, from political parties to museums and art galleries, from NGOs to commercial banks, and many others.

NHF receives \$40,000 grant

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) yesterday received a \$40,000 grant from Citibank Jordan to help support its micro-finance programme for women, an NHF statement said. Citibank Jordan General Manager Suhair Ali presented NHF Executive Director Sima Bahous with a check for the amount. The Citibank grant is in line with the strategy of the NHF and Citibank to forge strong cooperation between the private sector and NGOs in support of national development efforts, particularly those geared to upgrade the quality of life of underprivileged Jordanians. For over a decade, the NHF has been a provider of credit to local communities through revolving credit funds to help create job opportunities, improve income and enhance community self-reliance.

Opposition flays Pakistan leader's U.S. visit

ISLAMABAD (R) — Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was under attack from the opposition and a critical media Sunday for talks with President Bill Clinton that failed to make a breakthrough on key disputes and a sharpening economic crisis.

While Sharif stayed in America and was said to be planning trips to Disney World and Niagara Falls, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto termed his White House talks "a mere photo opportunity."

"It seems that Nero is fiddling while Pakistan is burning," Bhutto said in a statement, three days after the IMF postponed for one month talks on a rescue package and a key ratings agency downgraded Pakistan's debt to a record low.

"Sharif's insensitivity to economic realities is evident from the sheer waste of taxpayer's money incurred in taking a huge delegation of 130 people, food costs, hotel costs, travel allowances, daily allowances, etc. for a jaunt to Niagara Falls and Walt Disney. This is shocking behaviour," Bhutto said.

The English-language media pored in vain over a joint U.S.-Pakistan statement for signs that a crisis that started in May when Pakistan matched arch-foe India's nuclear tests might be easing, as the government had promised.

"So far the government's claim that the talks have been successful is not backed by any concrete evidence," The News said in an editorial. "The joint declaration fails to offer any hope to Pakistan, which expected more substantive results."

"A sombre joint statement on a sterile summit," was the headline over a commentary in the Frontier Post. "The joint statement... makes for sombre, if not outright gloomy reading."

Clinton waived many of the sanctions Washington clamped on Pakistan's indebted economy before talks with Sharif but made clear that the lifting of all such punitive measures was dependent on Pakistan reining in its nuclear programme.

Sharif repeated in a series of U.S. interviews that Islamabad wanted the sanctions lifted before it would sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), while Washington stuck to its position that Pakistan's signature would have to come first.

The Pakistani leader also failed to persuade Clinton to take a high-profile role in so far fruitless talks with India on their 50-year-old dispute over Kashmir, the cause of two of the rivals' three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

Sharif said Kashmir was a "nuclear flashpoint" in a region where one fifth of the world lives, but Clinton said he would only mediate if India agreed — and New Delhi says the conflict is a purely bilateral matter that warrants no outside intervention.

The harshest criticism was reserved for conflicting reports on what, if anything, Pakistan has agreed with the International Monetary Fund to shore up an economy teetering on the edge of default on \$32 billion debt with only \$480 million in reserves.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, one of several key ministers in Washington, said last month Pakistan had agreed on a \$5.6-billion loan that was frozen by sanctions. Talks on rescheduling up to \$3.3 in debt are also unlikely until January.

"With Pakistan's reserves already hovering around a record low of \$480 million, the IMF's decision puts a big question mark on the country's ability to meet its repayment commitments," The News said.



Joyous Taipei residents mob their new mayor-elect, Ma Ying-jeou, who claimed the Taiwan capital back for the ruling Nationalist Party in Saturday's elections. Ma soundly defeated Democratic Progressive Party incumbent Chen Shui-bian with a campaign portraying himself as a 'new Taiwanese' who could bury lingering rifts between local Taiwanese and the Nationalists 'mainlanders' who flooded Taiwan after losing the Chinese mainland to the Communists in 1949. Ma, 49, won strong support across ethnic lines despite his mainland roots (Reuters photo)

Taiwan city votes against idea of China rule

TAIPEI (R) — As voters islandwide elected a new parliament and the mayors of Taipei and southern Kaohsiung city and was seen as illegal by the Central Election Commission, which refused to accept the outcome.

Commission officials said Taiwan has no plebiscite law and the result of any referendum held by a local administration is deemed unofficial.

The referendum was sponsored by the Tainan City government headed by George Chang, a member of the independence-minded Democratic Progressive Party and former chairman of the World United Formosans for Independence, a group that advocated a formal split between Taiwan and mainland China.

Chang, who won the Tainan mayoral post in 1997, had once been wanted by authorities for allegedly masterminding a 1976 parcel bomb attack that crippled then Taiwan governor Shieh Tung-mun, a member of the ruling Nationalist Party.

The spokeswoman said the referendum had been approved by the Tainan city council and the result could be a reference for the central government to devise future mainland policy.

Taiwan and China split at the end of a civil war in 1949 when the Nationalist Republic of China government fled to the island. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province subject to eventual reunion with the mainland, by force if necessary.

The Nationalists espouse eventual reunion with China, but not until Beijing ends the Community Party's monopoly on power and embraces multiparty democracy.

MANILA (DPA) — Nineteen passengers on a Philippine Airlines (PAL) flight from Singapore to Manila were injured when the aircraft ran into severe air turbulence, reports said Sunday. Flight PR 504 was cruising at 37,000 feet when it encountered heavy turbulence, causing the Airbus 330-300 to drop 1,000 feet in a matter of seconds. The plane landed safely at Manila's international airport two hours later, the report said. PAL officials said most of the 283 passengers had unbuckled their seatbelts when the incident occurred. Those injured were thrown from their seats and pumped their heads on the aircraft's ceiling. One passenger, Jose Faustino Gonzales, 32, suffered a broken neck and was admitted to hospital. The others were allowed home after treatment by a Manila airport physician. It was the first accident encountered by a PAL plane since the debt-laden flag carrier resumed international operations in October after its temporary closure Sept. 23.

NEWS IN BRIEF

French protection troops arrive Macedonia

BELGRADE (DPA) — A contingent of French NATO soldiers Sunday arrived in Macedonia from where they will be ready to protect international observers in the neighbour southern Serbian province of Kosovo. The group of 40 soldiers is the first batch of what will be a French contingent of 700 troops for the protection force, the Beta news agency said. The North Atlantic Council issued the orders for the protection mission last Friday. More than 1,500 soldiers from France, Britain, Germany, Holland and Italy will be joining the force in Macedonia by the end of the week. The force will be responsible for protecting some 2,000 observers from Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE observers are monitoring the ceasefire in Kosovo as well as the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces and the return of refugees. Yugoslavia is opposed to the stationing of NATO protection troops in the neighbouring country and has issued a protest to the Macedonian government.

12,000 displaced as troops renew offensive in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (DPA) — More than 12,000 civilians fled homes in northern Sri Lanka after troops captured the area of Oddusudan in a fresh offensive against Tamil rebels, civilian sources said Sunday. The sources said many of those on the run were refugees who had been resettled in the area after being displaced during previous military operations. A military spokesman, Major I.N.K. Dewage, confirmed that troops were fanning out around Oddusudan, but said rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were using mortars against them. The offensive was launched Wednesday after a previous military push to recapture a strategic land route to the northern part of the peninsula was abandoned. The government has imposed strict censorship on news related to the offensive. A government spokesman admitted that civilians were being displaced, but said he had no official figures. The rebels have been fighting for 15 years for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka. About 55,000 people have been killed in the struggle.

19 injured as Philippine Airlines jet hits turbulence

MANILA (DPA) — Nineteen passengers on a Philippine Airlines (PAL) flight from Singapore to Manila were injured when the aircraft ran into severe air turbulence, reports said Sunday. Flight PR 504 was cruising at 37,000 feet when it encountered heavy turbulence, causing the Airbus 330-300 to drop 1,000 feet in a matter of seconds. The plane landed safely at Manila's international airport two hours later, the report said. PAL officials said most of the 283 passengers had unbuckled their seatbelts when the incident occurred. Those injured were thrown from their seats and pumped their heads on the aircraft's ceiling. One passenger, Jose Faustino Gonzales, 32, suffered a broken neck and was admitted to hospital. The others were allowed home after treatment by a Manila airport physician. It was the first accident encountered by a PAL plane since the debt-laden flag carrier resumed international operations in October after its temporary closure Sept. 23.

U.S. man convicted of infecting son with AIDS

CHICAGO (R) — A medical worker was found guilty late Saturday of infecting his 11-month-old son with AIDS-tainted blood, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported in its online edition. After deliberating for about seven hours, a jury in St. Charles, Missouri, near St. Louis, convicted Brian Stewart, 32, of first-degree assault and recommended he spend the rest of his life in prison, the newspaper said. It said sentencing was set for Jan. 8. Lawyers in the case could not be reached for comment. Prosecutors alleged during the trial that Stewart injected the tainted blood into his son to kill him in February 1992 to avoid paying child support. The incident allegedly happened in a hospital room where the boy was being treated for asthma. The boy now 7, was diagnosed with AIDS four years later. His mother, Stewart's ex-girlfriend, said the boy required around-the-clock care with expensive drugs, had lost most of his hearing and been near death several times.

Anti-shark surfboard launched

SYDNEY (DPA) — An electronic shark repellent small enough to fit on a surfboard has been tested in Australia with promising results, news reports Sunday said. Inventor Naas Harzenberg, who recently emigrated from South Africa, said the device sends out a signal that irritates a shark's sensitive snout. The shark experiences the signal internally as a cramp-like discomfort, becomes irritated and turns away. Harzenberg told the Sydney's Sun-Herald newspaper. The device has worked with great white sharks in Australia and bronze whalers in South Africa as well as with grey reef sharks and hammerheads. Australian shark expert Rodney Fox said further testing was needed but that he was impressed with the results of the initial trials.

Earthquake rocks eastern Indonesia

JAKARTA (DPA) — An earthquake rocked the eastern Indonesian island Sunday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or structural damage. The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, jolted north Sulawesi and north Maluku provinces at 8.47 a.m. (90047 GMT), said an official at Jakarta's meteorological and geophysics office. The tremor caused panic among residents in Manado, the capital of north Sulawesi. Jakarta's evening Suara Pembaruan daily reported. The epicentre was in the Maluku Sea, about 125 km southeast of Manado. It occurred some 100 km beneath the sea bed, the official said. An earthquake of 6.5 on the Richter scale jolted Mangole and nearby islands on Nov. 29, killing at least 50 people, injured scores of others and destroyed or damaging more than 800 houses.

'Khmer surrender may help Cambodia's standing'

PHNOM PENH (R) — A mass defection by the last Khmer Rouge fighters may help trouble-plagued Cambodia retake its place on the international stage, analysts said Sunday.

The formation of a new coalition government last week has cleared the way for Cambodia to reoccupy its U.N. seat. Momentum is also building for Cambodia's admission to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a group summit in Hanoi later this month.

But diplomats sounded a note of caution. "The Khmer Rouge defections will be seen as a positive development in terms of removing Cambodia from the category of problem state, but I'm not sure how much of a dominant factor it will be," said a Western diplomat.

And a diplomat from an ASEAN country warned that Cambodia's admission was not yet guaranteed.

"Things are brightening up for sure, but it could be very difficult to find a consensus, and if so, the matter will be deferred," the diplomat said. "Unless there's a consensus, there's no go."

Cambodia's U.N. seat was left vacant last year after the bloody collapse of a coalition between then co-prime ministers Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh. Cambodia's admission to ASEAN, originally due to take place last year, was also deferred indefinitely.

But the surrender of a group of key Khmer Rouge lieutenants Friday has effectively ended their war and brought the country unity not seen in decades.

It is likely to strengthen the hand of those arguing for Cambodia's rapid admission to ASEAN. Last month Hun Sen, whose party narrowly won a July election, was able to agree a new coalition with Ranariddh's party, ending the 17-month political crisis.

Formal endorsement of a decision allowing Cambodia to reoccupy its U.N. seat is due in New York Monday.

ASEAN said a new government must be in place before Cambodia could join. Cambodia says it has now fulfilled the requirement and should be allowed in.

"We have formed a government reflecting the will of the people. We feel we have fulfilled our obligations, there are no more obstacles," said foreign ministry spokesman Hor Sothun.

For the Cambodian government, ASEAN membership would not bring immediate financial rewards but it would confer much-sought international legitimacy.

But some in ASEAN argue that the new government should be given time to prove its stability and finalise institutional reform, including formation of a senate, as agreed in the coalition pact.

"The real concern is political stability. A government doesn't necessarily mean stability," said another diplomat from the

region. "Certain countries prefer to wait and see. They say there's no need to rush."

There is also some lingering resentment over Hun Sen's blunt rejection of ASEAN efforts to resolve the political crisis in the wake of his coup last year. Hun Sen snubbed initial mediation efforts by a team of three ASEAN foreign ministers and blasted what he said was interference in Cambodia's internal affairs.

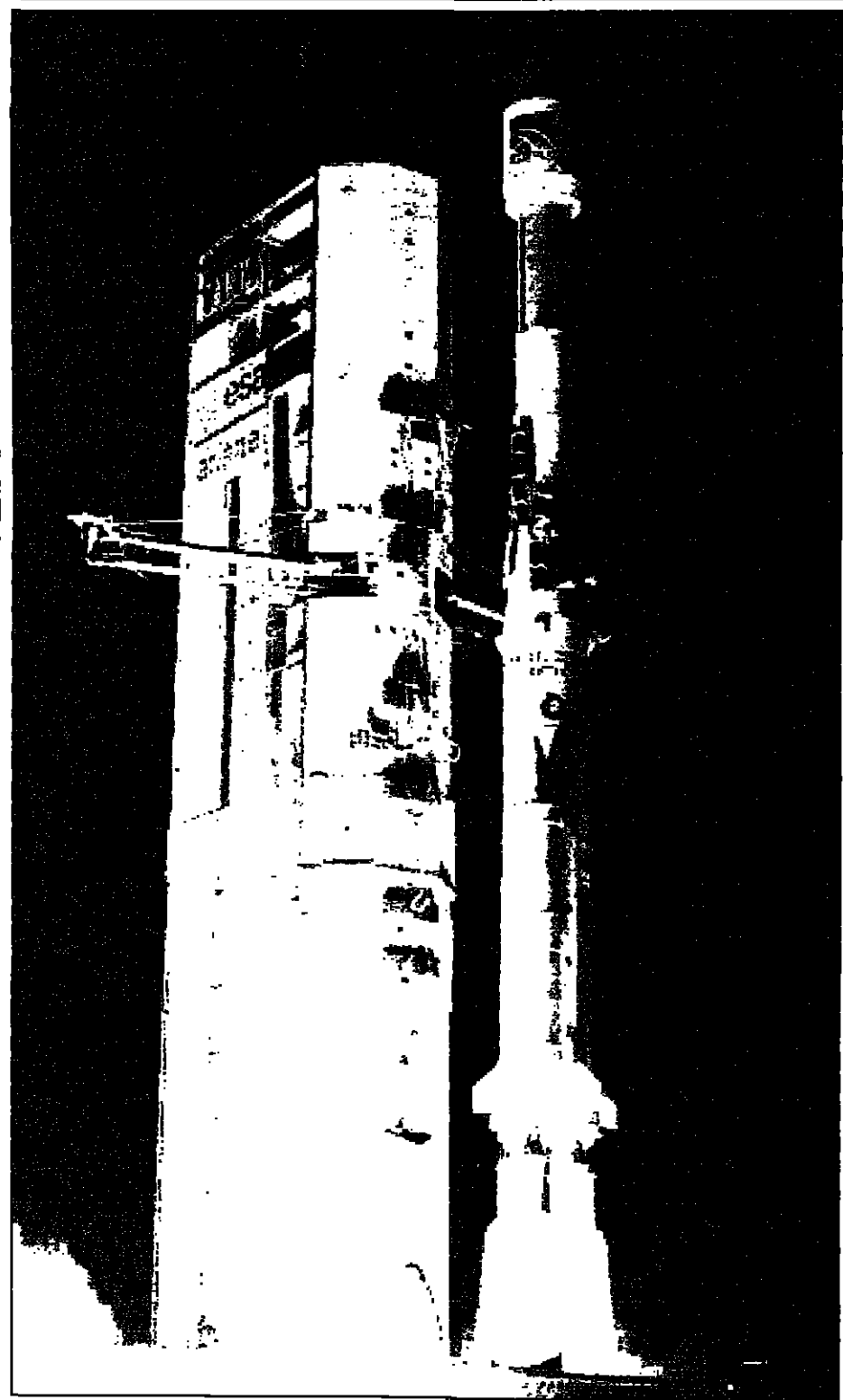
Hor Sothun said lessons had been learnt.

"When you drive a car you have to look forward. If you look back all the time you'll crash," the foreign ministry spokesman said. "We've learnt the lessons of the past."

Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos and Myanmar are pushing for Cambodia's admission while the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia have sounded notes of caution. Singapore and Brunei, which make up the last of the ASEAN nine, are said to be in the middle.

"ASEAN would rather not this be an issue. We should not deflect the main purpose of the summit which is to show the world we are determined to forge ahead and solve economic problems," said one of the ASEAN diplomats.

"We just want to make sure everything goes smoothly, and some specifics, like the Senate, are in place. A little pressure might get them to get it together," he said. "If we could wait six months or so it would probably be better for Cambodia."



Western Europe's 114th Ariane rocket equipped with two liquid strap-on boosters blasts off from the European Space Agency space centre. Ariane successfully put into orbit a Mexican SATMEX-5 telecommunications satellite 19 minutes after launch (Reuters photo)

World
Chinese
release
Missiden

Results tr
from Nige
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Albania
police

Albania
police

Albania
police

Chinese police release seven dissidents

BEIJING (DPA) — Chinese police have released seven dissidents they had arrested over the past 48 hours but the fate of civil rights campaigner Liu Shaozhi was still unclear, the Information Centre for Democracy and Human Rights said in Hong Kong Sunday.

Liu was arrested in Liaoning province, but it was not known Sunday whether he was still being held, would face charges or would be released, the Information Centre said.

Two of the freed dissidents, Wang Zechen and Wang Wenjiang, who were arrested at Anshan in Liaoning province, were released Saturday, the Information Centre said.

The two activists had been trying to set up a meeting in Liaoning for members of a banned opposition party. They were also the initiators of a protest letter from 191 dissidents calling for the immediate release of the leading dissidents Xu Wenli, Qin Yongmin and Wang Youcai.

As prospective leaders of the banned party Xu, Qin and Wang have been charged with endangering state security and attempting to overthrow the government.

Frank Lu Siqing of the Information Centre in Hong Kong said the position of

the three dissidents was "very serious." Another 139 dissidents living abroad have also called for their release in an open letter.

Police carried out the arrests in six cities Friday and Saturday. Among those held was the dissident Ren Wanding who was questioned for three hours in Beijing, the Information Centre reported.

In Wuhan the dissidents Chen Zhonghe and Xiao Shichang were arrested for four hours. In Shandong province the 1989 student leader Wang Zhenyun received a police warning, as did Zhai Weimin, another pro-democracy student leader, in Henan province. Wang and Zhai fasted for 24 hours in protest over their arrest.

In Shanghai the trial of Lin Hai, a 30-year-old computer expert Lin Hai ended Friday after one day, the Information Centre reported. He is accused of passing on 30,000 Chinese e-mail addresses to a pro-democracy Internet magazine in the United States.

No conviction was announced following the trial which was held behind closed doors on charges of "incitement to overthrow the Chinese government."

The Information Centre said Lin sent the addresses for purely commercial purposes and has denied having any political motives.



A Russian cadet from the military Space Academy casts his ballot beneath a Russian flag in St. Petersburg. Russia's second city voted Sunday for a new legislative assembly after a campaign marred by violence and corruption which was overshadowed by the murder of prominent democratic leader Galina Starovoitova (Reuters photo)

Russia's second city votes

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (R) — Russia's second city voted Sunday for a new legislative assembly after a campaign marred by violence and corruption and overshadowed by the murder of prominent democratic leader Galina Starovoitova.

About 5,000 police fanned out through St. Petersburg to maintain order as citizens went to vote in damp and overcast but relatively mild weather, Russian news agencies said. There were no immediate reports of incidents.

A sleazy campaign has led this elegant 18th-century city of islands and canals built on the orders of Peter the Great to be dubbed Russia's crime capital and compared with 1920s Chicago.

City officials angrily deny the comparison.

The Nov. 20 death of Starovoitova in a hail of automatic gunfire in the stairwell of her St. Petersburg apartment block has not been solved, but is linked by most commentators with local politics rather than the broader Russian political struggle in Moscow.

Starovoitova, a deputy in Russia's national parliament, was not herself running in Sunday's poll but

had helped choose a new group of candidates to challenge established figures.

Physical attacks on candidates and campaign workers, drive-by shootings, and widespread allegations of intimidation, vote-buying and other crooked practices marked the campaign.

The city's electoral commission, in a statement Thursday, told voters to be "resolute and vigilant."

"Remember that the secret voting procedure does not allow anyone to check your choice," it said.

Associates of Starovoitova have reported receiving anonymous phone calls threatening they would be "sent after" her. Some well-known candidates have mysteriously found opponents of the same name also standing in their electoral districts.

Starovoitova's murder has drawn worldwide attention to the St. Petersburg elections, which analysts portray as centring on the future of a new city charter expanding the powers of the assembly at the expense of Governor Vladimir Yakovlev.

Key economic interests are also at stake in a city that continues to attract investment despite the economic crisis gripping Russia as a whole.

Electoral officials quoted by the agencies said they expected a turnout of only about 35 per cent of the city's 3.7 million voters in the two-stage elections.

Nearly 600 candidates are competing for the 50 seats in the assembly. A second-round run-off between the two top contenders will be held on December 20 in electoral districts where no candidate wins over 50 per cent of the vote in the first round. Officials said they expected this to be the case in most districts.

Starovoitova's murder shocked Russia's fractious democratic parties into jointly drawing up a list of candidates they said were free of criminal associations. But, despite St. Petersburg's liberal, intellectual tradition, there has been little sign of genuine unity among the parties which espouse democratic ideals.

"I'm a veteran of the blockade and in those days there was unity of the people and the authorities," Ella, a 64-year-old pensioner, said in reference to the World War II German siege of what was then called Leningrad.

"Now the personal ambitions of the politicians are crushing common sense," she said as she went to vote.

'S. Korea's defence minister must go'

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's opposition called for the resignation of the country's defence minister Sunday after a series of military accidents including firings of a fully armed missile and flare bombs over civilian areas.

In the latest mishap, a military exercise went awry at dawn Sunday when a shell from a flare bomb smashed through two walls of an elderly woman's house near where exploding missile fragments rained on civilians two days ago, officials said.

The shell of the flare bomb, fired by South Korean marines, was propelled farther than expected and landed on the home in Kimpo, several kilometres west of Seoul, a navy official said.

"Minister Cheon (Yong-Taek) must immediately resign. Or (President Kim Dae-Jung) must dismissed

him," the opposition Grand National Party said in a statement.

"A government that does not fear the people is not the people's government," Minister Cheon is trying to hold on to his seat with just a word of apology... an act of utter arrogance," it said.

The ministry apologised Saturday for the missile accident.

The flare bomb shell penetrated two walls before lodging in the bathroom of the house, a navy official said.

The 83-year-old owner was treated for shock at a nearby hospital, he said.

Friday, South Korean forces accidentally launched an anti-aircraft missile which exploded in mid-air, injuring at least three civilians.

Defence ministry officials said the missile was fired during an equipment-checking drill at an air

force base in the western port city of Incheon, some 40 kilometres from the border dividing the two Koreas.

An automatic safety device caused the missile to self-destruct in mid-air three seconds after it was launched because a target was not assigned to it, officials said.

Later the same day as the missile misfired, heavy ammunition exploded at a military base in northeastern Kangwon province, killing three soldiers and injuring others, the defence ministry said.

That explosion is also being investigated, ministry officials said.

"We are deeply sorry for causing anxiety to the public," said a top aide to Defence Minister Cheon, declining to be identified.

"We will do our best to minimise the consequences and take steps for legal reparations," he said.

No violence, pleads Indonesian opposition

JAKARTA (R) — One of Indonesia's most popular opposition leaders Sunday urged thousands of cheering supporters to push for political reform peacefully.

"We must continue our struggle without violence," pleaded Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of a breakaway faction of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI).

Megawati, daughter of Indonesia's still popular founding president, Sukarno, is the latest political figure to appeal for an end to the violence that has rocked the world's fourth most populated nation for much of this year.

President B. J. Habibie Saturday pleaded for an end to the bloodshed that has swept his troubled country.

"All forms of threats, violence, looting and cruelty are disgraceful acts. Religion teaches us to uphold peace," he told a group of Muslim leaders.

About 10,000 Megawati supporters, many wearing the party's red blazers, packed a city centre basketball stadium and spilled into the carpark Sunday, in Jakarta's largest political rally in weeks.

Thousands waved flags and cheered as they listened to Megawati, a leading contender for next year's presi-

dential election.

Some waved portraits of Megawati and Sukarno, who died in 1970. Others chanted "Hang Suharto!" referring to the disgraced former general forced to quit as president in May amid an economic meltdown and political turmoil.

The crowd began dispersing peacefully after Megawati finished speaking, with groups of supporters on motorbikes racing through the city centre waving red PDI flags and banners.

Elsewhere, the capital was quiet, although roads around the central Istiqlal mosque and the Catholic Cathedral were closed by troops. Mosques and churches around Indonesia have been the focus of bloody religious clashes in recent weeks.

The political focus is expected to turn to the millionaire Suharto and his wealth this week as he faces interrogation by Attorney-General Andi Ghalib.

Ghalib said Saturday he planned to call the former general in for questioning Wednesday.

Some analysts estimate Suharto and his family built up a personal fortune worth \$40 million during his harsh 32-year rule.

Habibie, Suharto's hand-picked successor, ordered the probe under growing pressure from protesters and opposition leaders to move against Suharto.

But many reformists say he has not gone far enough. They want Suharto tried on charges of corruption and human rights abuses during his army-backed reign.

Opinion polls show Habibie is deeply unpopular, with the support of only about seven per cent of voters.

Megawati has the backing of about 30 per cent, just behind the most popular candidate, Amien Rais, with 31 per cent.

Rais heads the National Mandate Party (PAN) and is the former leader of Indonesia's second largest Muslim group, Muhammadiyah.

About 100 new parties have sprung up in the post-Suharto era after Habibie ended restrictions that allowed only three parties, including the ruling Golkar.

Indonesians will vote for a new parliament on June 7. The nation's highest legislative body, the People's Consultative Assembly, which includes the parliament, will elect a president and vice-president during a special session from Aug. 29.

Results trickle in from Nigerian local elections

NAIROBI (DPA) — The first results from Nigeria's local elections trickled in Sunday, as officials with the electoral commission pronounced themselves pleased with the way the voting had gone Saturday.

Vote counting began late Saturday, and newspapers Sunday reported that three out of the nine political parties contesting the polls looked strong: The Alliance for Democracy, the All Peoples Party and the Peoples Democratic Party.

Results from roughly half the polling stations were expected to be in by late Sunday, with final results not expected until Monday at the earliest, officials said.

Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission said it was pleased that millions of voters turned out for the election, which went relatively smoothly, despite a delay in voting materials — reaching some polling stations.

Only two violent incidents were reported. Six

people were killed in clashes between rival parties in the Niger Delta, and in Ekiti State a drunk policeman shot dead a man and was then killed by a mob.

Saturday's local elections were seen as a test run for democracy in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country which has been controlled for 15 years by military strongmen.

State elections are due to be held in January, with national legislative and presidential elections slated for February.

Nigeria's president, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, is credited with starting the country's return to democracy, and promises to hand over power to an elected civilian at the end of May.

Abubakar took over as head of state after the death last June of General Sanni Abacha, widely regarded as a corrupt and hardline dictator.

Albanian interior minister warns police would suppress new riots

TIRANA (DPA) — Albanian Public Affairs Minister Petro Koci said Sunday police have taken measures to prevent armed unrest by opposition supporters in the coming days.

In an interview with the independent daily Shekulli, Koci said police would put an end to any effort to violate laws or attack state institutions.

Pro-opposition student groups and the main opposition Democratic Party have announced rallies and processions

next Tuesday, on the 8th anniversary of the students' movement of 1990 which led to the collapse of the communist regime in Albania.

Albanian officials have expressed concern that opposition leader Sali Berisha might use student protests to provoke new violence in Albania.

"Berisha is trying to use the students for his own political aims, to try to return to power, but he will not succeed in this," Koci said.

Pro-Berisha student groups, who have

caused chaos in some of the country's universities with day-long protests, have not been able to mobilise large numbers of students on their side.

Student leaders told local newspapers Sunday that they would radicalise their protests next week by going on hunger strikes.

Their main demands include improvement of living conditions in student campuses and the arrest of killers of opposition politician Azem Hajdari, who was shot

dead by unknown gunmen on Sept. 14.

"On Dec. 8 we shall again hold our usual procession in Tirana, after that day we shall speak differently (with the government)," one of their leaders said in a Sunday newspaper interview.

Officials fear that the protests could degenerate into armed attacks against state and public buildings as happened on September 14 when Berisha's armed supporters looted and set fire to many of public

buildings in an attempt to force the government to resign.

"There will never be a repetition of Sept. 14. Albanian police are prepared to avoid it, Koci said.

The situation in Albania remains tense, largely due to the radical stands of the opposition Democratic Party which has boycotted all state institutions, including the parliament, and has demanded the formation of a technical government and early general elections.

Venezuela elects a new president, Chavez tipped to win

CARACAS (DPA) — The former leader of a failed military coup looked on course Sunday to win Venezuela's presidential election, according to public opinion surveys.

Hugo Chavez, who spent two years in jail after the failed military coup in 1992 against the President Carlos Perez, had the support of 55 to 60 per cent of people questioned.

In order to win Sunday, Chavez needs only a simple majority. The first official results are expected early Monday local time.

Almost 11.5 million voters were eligible to vote in the election. For the first time since Venezuela returned to democratic rule in 1958, the two traditional parties, Democratic Action and the Social Christian Party, are not represented by candidates of their own.

Only a few days ahead of the election, both parties withdrew their candidates, Luis Alfaro Uzcero for Democratic Action

(AD), and Irene Saez, a former 1981 Miss Universe beauty contest winner, for the Social Christian Party (Copei), and urged their supporters to vote for Sales.

Voting went off largely without untoward incidents Sunday and 300 international observers, including 58 from the European Union, were on hand to monitor the balloting. Tens of thousands of police and national guard patrolled the streets.

The strongest candidate against 44-year-old Chavez was expected to be Henrique Salas Ronder, 62, an independent with Social-Christian leanings. Salas is a graduate of Yale University in the United States.

Analysts warned of violence after the first official results are announced early Monday local time. Former President Perez said there may even be a military putsch if Chavez wins while a victory for Sales would enrage his rival's mainly poor supporters.

Salas said of Chavez's

supporters: "A lot of them have their weapons at the ready."

The winner of the election will succeed President Rafael Caldera. Under Venezuela's constitution, a president cannot serve two consecutive terms.

Chavez, known as Hurricane Hugo, is running under the banner of the Patriotic Pole alliance.

He has strong support among Venezuela's poor people and has called for a battle against corruption, a new federal constitution, the introduction of price and currency controls, and changes in the privatisation process.

"I want to create a new, humanitarian economic system," said Chavez who has been refused a visa to enter the United States which calls him a "terrorist." The Catholic Church in Venezuela has warned that if he wins Chavez will establish a "totalitarian regimes."

Chavez is also feared by many leaders of Venezuela's oil-rich business community.

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Faith and trust heal

THE GENERAL public does not seem to be willing to give the Tarawneh government a break in its estimation of the government's first 100 days in office. While more than 25 per cent of opinion leaders responded that the government is "highly capable" of meeting its stated mandate, the general public opinion was slightly lower — a result quite contrasting with the opinion poll carried out during the government's first week in late August.

Interestingly, though, the survey showed a higher public regard for the government's dealings with very specific issues.

This, along with the fact that more and more people regard the government as capable of meeting future challenges, should send a strong and clear message to the government: Jordanians, through the misdeeds and inaction of so many previous governments, have lost faith in government, but they are waiting for the government to reestablish that faith. And in certain areas, such as unemployment and poverty, the survey shows that the government has given people hope.

It is worth noting that these are the issues on which the government has been most vocal and most visible.

Conversely, we note that on issues such as paring down the lumbering bureaucracy and fighting corruption, the government scored much lower. Again, it is worth mentioning that when the government bans the press from covering the work of the committee investigating the water scandal or the case against the former director of the National Aid Fund accused of embezzling millions from the poorest of our poor, the public's trust in government takes a big hit, reminding the government that the public's right to know must be respected.

The debate over the firing and subsequent rehiring of employees at the Ministry of Social Development — which can only be described as wavering on a commitment — could not have played in the government's favour.

Perhaps this latter point begs the question of the national dialogue, a subject which took a beating in the survey. The number of respondents who said they no longer believe the government can successfully pursue the dialogue increased by four per cent.

The survey seems to suggest that all these issues are still important to Jordanians, who are in turn prepared to work with the government to find solutions to all these challenges through comprehensive dialogue.

It can never be emphasised enough that trust, once lost, is hard to regain — even if this government had no hand in dashing the public trust. Jordanians have indicated that their faith can be restored. The government should not miss this opportunity.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh reviewed Jordan's role in the region saying the Kingdom was established to fulfil a special "renewable" role, which no party can neutralise. The Kingdom has played an effective role on the Palestinian front, even though the nature of Jordan's role changed after the Oslo Agreement and some people thought this role had ended. Another important Jordanian role has been in the Arab Gulf, with 300,000 citizens working there establishing strong ties with its states. Once again, some parties thought that these relationships would have been severed in the Gulf War, said Faneh, but the reality proved the opposite. In addition, said the writer, the Kingdom has always been supportive and sympathetic with the Iraqi people throughout their travails. His Majesty King Hussein was not looking for a role to play in the Wye River Accord, yet that role came searching for the King. The country will always look to achieving local-Arab goals for all parties' benefit, claimed Faneh.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said that after the nine years of sanctions imposed on Iraq and the "legitimate" implementation of the U.N. resolution to destroy the country's capability to produce weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. has apparently been "forced" to declare the reasons for all this. This can be observed after the superpower failed to strike Iraq recently, claimed the writer, and its allies became less and less convinced about the policies used against Iraq, especially with the sanctions' impact on children. Aiming at the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime is now a clear U.S.-U.K. policy, said the writer, who added that despite all positive efforts these countries can be expected to continue to pursue this policy.

Economic Review

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Beware of the rent seekers

LAST WEEK the General Committee for the Association of Stock Brokers protested the decision by the Securities Commission to issue additional stockbrokerage licenses in a bid to expand market participation with the expectation of market deepening and increased activity in the Amman Financial Market. Days later, many would be investors in the taxi business were in uproar over the decision by the Ministry of the Interior to stop the issue of taxi office licenses. Although both incidents and the reactions may seem on the outset dissimilar, even opposite, they are closely related: they address the issue of rent-seeking in the Jordanian economy, a phenomenon which can destroy any market economy and encourage informal markets — unregulated and sometimes illegal activities — thereby reducing Jordan's chances for development.

Before we deal with the issue of rent seeking let us first define economic rent — a closely related concept — which is, as defined by Hal Varian the famous economist from Michigan University, "those pay-

ments to a factor of production (input) that are in excess of the minimum payment necessary to have that factor supplied." Consider, for example, the case of the stockbrokerage firms. In order to sell a share at the Amman Financial Market one needs a buyer and a seller, they both must want to act freely and have the ability to do so (the buyer can afford the seller's price and the seller actually owns the share and is willing to let go of it at the agreed price). The stockbroker acts as a middle person and facilitates the exchange for a fee. Suppose that the intermediation costs the stockbroker JD1 and people actually demand the services of the broker and are willing to pay more than the JD1, then any money he/she makes in commission beyond the JD1 is considered economic rent.

Why don't other firms enter the stockbrokerage business and drive the broker's economic rent down? Well, actually they want to enter badly and may try to do so. However, one does not simply become a stockbroker just because he/she wants to; one has to have a

licence. There are 27 licensed stockbrokerage firms and they do not want newcomers. Why? In a competitive setting there would be free entry and the price would be driven down to the competitive price level and only normal profits would occur. That is why the brokerage association is up in arms in an attempt to stop entry.

In the case of taxi licences, over 220 investors were dismayed over the sudden decision not to issue any new licences after they had incurred significant sunk (non-redeemable) costs in terms of fees, application time, waiting, property rental and the purchase of equipment, etc. Their complaint was that they had already invested heavily into the process to obtain a licence to operate a taxi business. Again, the incumbents enjoy economic rent, which would have been driven down with more entries into the business. In fact, it can be argued that limiting taxi licences has helped create many of the inefficiencies (run-down taxis and not enough of them) we are witnessing today and encourages what is known in economics as rent seek-

ing behaviour.

Economist John B. Taylor of Stanford University, a member of the Council of Economic Advisers from 1989-1991, aptly defines rent-seeking as "behaviour on part of the firms or individuals intended to preserve or obtain rights, privileges, or licences through which above-normal profits can be earned." According to this definition, the acts of the stockbrokerage association would be considered rent-seeking should they succeed in preventing new entry into the market. The use of "wasta" is also a form of rent-seeking by individuals to secure benefits for themselves or kinfolk they would not have obtained in a competitive setting, the rigging of bids or their sale before the tendering process is also a form of rent-seeking.

Why is rent seeking loathed? It is based on the basic premise of preventing others to enter into production or consumption of a product, which distorts the commercial process and generates many informal practices. For example, it can be argued that high taxes lead to

intense smuggling activities and while smuggling allows consumers to have access to the goods at cheaper prices, it does not encourage the transfer of technology and the creation of know-how industries and value added, which is the main reason why smuggling is considered a "bad" economic activity from a purely development perspective.

Jordan and Jordanians must be aware of rent seeking and the rent-seekers. It is very easy in the absence of information to resort to rent seeking and further distort the market. In the meantime, and specifically in the case of the taxi licences, government policy must never be changed abruptly because sudden changes prevent businesses from creating rational expectations about the market. Businesses and investment, which are in the pipeline (establishment or pre-production stage), must be given enough time to adjust, otherwise everybody loses. The market game can be a win-win game whether we all (consumers, producers, and government) emerge as winners, it never had to be a zero-sum game.



Macho nonsense

To the editor:

IF STRICT laws are not enforced against outlaws who satisfy their whims by showing their imperfect masculinity under the absurd conception of "cleansing the honour of the family," the law of the jungle will definitely prevail.

Mazen Al Tamimi
 Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Income tax: Many happy returns

By Gwynne Dyer

"And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed..." — the Christian Bible, Luke, ch. 2, v. 1

BUT IT wasn't really taxed until 200 years ago last week, when the British government introduced the world's first income tax. And the Inland Revenue Department, Britain's answer to the Spanish Inquisition, actually dares to celebrate this event.

All the former Chancellors of the Exchequer — an archaic British constitutional term meaning "chief extortioner" — will show up at Somerset House in London for Thursday's revels (which are presumably tax-free). And once the grandees have drunk their fill and departed, the Great Unwashed will be admitted to a special exhibition about the institution that now dominates their lives.

It begins with a video of William Pitt the Younger — looking remarkably well for his age — who announces: "I introduced income tax 200 years ago. I didn't expect you still to be paying it today." But he really should have known better.

The youngest prime minister in British history took his fateful decision in the midst of the great war triggered by the French revolution, when Britain was standing virtually alone against Napoleon's armies. The government's traditional sources of revenue, customs duties and excise (sales) taxes, didn't even begin to cover the huge cost of this new kind of warfare, so it finally decided, with great reluctance, to tax its own supporters.

When Prime Minister Pitt announced the introduction of an "income tax" on 3 December, 1798, he promised that this intolerable intrusion by the state into the public's private affairs would only last for the duration of the war against Napoleon. He had to, for the income tax was levied on the

"property classes", the only people in 18th-century Britain who had a substantial cash income — but also the only people with the right to vote.

When the war against Napoleon ended in 1801, so did the income tax. It was reintroduced in 1803 when war broke out again, but after Napoleon was finally defeated and exiled to St. Helena, it was permanently consigned to the rubbish-heap of history in 1816. It had been so universally hated that even the RECORDS of income tax payments were destroyed. But you can't keep a good idea down.

"There are those that seem to have nothing else to do but to suggest modes of taxation to men in office," complained Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel in 1842. All those suggestions were for alternative ways of raising revenue that would avoid a return of the dreaded income tax — but none of them yielded enough money to meet the huge cash needs of the world's greatest power.

So Peel brought back the income tax in Britain in 1842, and it has never gone away again. By mid-century several other countries in Europe were also levying income tax on their citizens — and in 1862 it spread to the United States, when a federal income tax was introduced to pay for the Civil War.

Washington killed the tax after the defeat of the Confederacy, but in 1894 Congress succumbed to temptation and levied a 2 per cent income tax on both individuals and businesses. The following year the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional, but nothing could stop the juggernaut for long. By the time Congress passed the 16th Amendment in 1913, which made a federal income tax legal, a number of states were already levying it on their own residents.

Indeed, even some cities in America began to collect their own income taxes, which may help to explain the deep and special hatred of income tax in the United States. Where else could you end up filling out three separate forms and paying income tax to three different levels of government, fed-

eral, state, and municipal?

But in principle (deep breath, now) income tax is a Good Thing. As a general proposition, the larger the share of the population that pays income tax, the more developed the country. And this is no coincidence: as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. of the U.S. Supreme Court remarked in 1930: "I pay my tax bills more readily than any others — for whether the money is well or ill spent, I get civilised society for it."

Indeed you do. A law-abiding society that pays its taxes is generally a society that protects the weak, and in most cases it is a more prosperous one as well. That is why countries like India (where only about one per cent of the population currently pays income tax) greet every expansion of the tax base as a social and political triumph — and why Russia is a disaster area.

Last year only 5 million Russians out of 147 million paid their taxes, and the country's corporate sector had an even worse record. So the government had to meet basic operating expenses by borrowing abroad at exorbitant interest rates, and still could not afford to pay the wages of its own employees, who therefore had no money to pay their taxes anyway... which is why the country ultimately toppled into a calamitous devaluation of the rouble.

The government makes great efforts to get ordinary Russians to pay their taxes, from frequent news reports of pistol-waving tax police bursting into suspect businesses to "12 Maroseika Street", a TV drama whose heroes, tax policemen Nikita Arlov and Dmitri Rusanov, are (in the words of scriptwriter Sergei Belosilnikov) "just simple Russian guys who are doing their jobs honestly and well enough. Their motto is: 'We can be defeated but we can't be bought.'" (Just like real life in Moscow.)

So if the burden of paying income tax seems too much, think about Russia. You'll soon be having kind thoughts about William Pitt — although you may still agree with Albert Einstein, who once remarked: "The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax."

Shrines to destruction

By Martin Woollacott

WHEN A RELIGION is in decline there may be a long period when, even though its temples empty and its priests turn apostate, the tenets of belief are still haltingly and hollowly observed.

So it is with the religion of nuclear deterrence. Thousands of missile silos, shrines to destruction, are still powered and manned, nuclear-armed submarines still quarter the oceans, the scriptures are still studied in war ministries and staff colleges, and there are still converts, in the shape of an India, a Pakistan, or an Iraq, who wish to join the elect. Yet nuclear deterrence, as a belief system, is close to collapse in the countries where it was invented.

Many of the generals who commanded nuclear forces, the politicians who were involved in nuclear decision-making, and the intellectuals who tried to create doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons have now repudiated deterrence, wholly or in part.

Those who now advise or advocate nuclear weapons programmes are usually mediocrities, time servers, or careerists, like the third rate scientists responsible for the Indian and Pakistani tests. Or they are politicians — like some in Russia, who see in nuclear weapons a currency that can buy continued great power status after economic and conventional military strength has dwindled away.

The terrible truth about this decayed religion is that it retains the capacity to exact unimaginable sacrifices from the human race.

True, the nightmare of a huge exchange of weapons between Russia and the United States may now be very distant. It has been replaced in Western countries, but at a much lower level of awareness, by anxieties over proliferation, and over the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorists or by "rogue states" like Iraq.

But, on the whole, the public in developed countries acts either as if nuclear weapons had already been abolished or as if the maintenance of these arsenals was a safe procedure. The political and military establishments, meanwhile, act as if these weapons were as necessary as they ever were.

They may not really believe it, but the habit of belief remains intact, largely because assessing deterrence in the degenerate form in which it now exists requires a revolution in understanding the history of the last 50 years, an effort which is only just beginning to be made.

What is left is the muddled idea that since nuclear deterrence supposed-

ly "worked" in the past, it still "works" today.

When this notion is challenged, even in a small way, Washington, the Vatican of deterrence, reacts with anger. The German defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, has consequently had to equivocate on his coalition's argument that NATO should adopt a No First Use policy.

Germany would do nothing unilaterally, he said after meetings in Washington last week. Yet a proper American response would have been to say that such a move was eminently worth exploring during the discussions about a new strategic concept for the alliance, which are going on in preparation for the 50th anniversary summit of NATO in April next year.

The refusal to embrace No First Use of nuclear weapons in the past was based on NATO's need to be able to respond to Soviet conventional superiority. That conventional advantage has not only disappeared, but been replaced by a Western superiority — to such an extent that Russia abandoned its own No First Use pledge in 1993.

It is hard to say which country is being more irrational.

Neither faces any threat to which the appropriate response would be the first use of nuclear weapons. Certainly not from each other, and, as to other possibilities, would even the use by Saddam Hussein, say, of a biological or chemical weapon, justify firing nuclear missiles at Iraq? Washington's resistance to German ideas is no doubt less to do with the No First Use debate than with the fact that No First Use leads on naturally to other measures of disarmament, like the withdrawal of the tactical nuclear weapons still deployed in Europe.

Not that the nuclear powers are against arms reductions. The Pentagon, it was revealed this week, may well go ahead with unilateral reductions of its nuclear forces in the event that the Russians fail to ratify the Start-II treaty in the near future. The weapons, it seems, cost too much.

The problem here, as Jonathan Schell points out in his new book, *The Gift of Time*, is that arms reductions have been part of the game of deterrence for many years. They were and are aimed at preserving the deterrent in a "safer" form rather than abolishing it.

This is a critical and intricate question, as Schell demonstrates in his book. While advocates of arms reductions and advocates of abolition can work together, there is a sharp distinction between real disarmers and those who propose only a certain "tidying up" of the deterrent, to make accidents less likely and to appease non-nuclear powers.

Even between those who want the deepest of cuts and those who want abolition there is ultimately a very important difference. Extreme reduc-

tionists may call for the standing down, the disassembly, or the destruction of all weapons, with only a residual capacity to reconstitute nuclear forces remaining. Abolition, on the other hand, involves complete renunciation, with no road back to weapons envisaged.

Would that we were at the stage where such arguments could be joined in practice rather than only in theory. But we are stuck in Cold War mud. The men and women interviewed by Schell in his book, most of whom held important positions in the nuclear establishment, offer different solutions to the problem of nuclear weapons. But all are agreed that present doctrine is a palsied holdover from the past.

The only difference is that the names of previous enemies have been rubbed out and such formulations as "a rogue state", "terrorists", or "Russia... should circumstances change for the worse" as the British defence review put it, are filled in instead.

The former U.S. ambassador, Thomas Graham, led the successful American campaign to persuade non-nuclear states to indefinitely extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

He recently wrote to NATO leaders — including Tony Blair — that the non-proliferation regime will be in "grave danger" if NATO continues "to assign a high value to nuclear weapons, for instance as an essential bulwark of Alliance cohesion".

Instead NATO ought to be moving toward No First Use, the de-alerting of tactical nuclear weapons preparatory to their abolition, and an end to nuclear sharing.

As Schell's title implies, we have been given time to deal with the nuclear menace, and have already wasted much of it.

Clinton, the president who could have championed disarmament, did not do so, partly because of his difficult relations with the military.

But the essence of the situation is that the days when the nuclear deterrent, apart from being justified by what seemed to be a manifest threat, was sincerely defended by able generals, formidable intellectuals, and powerful politicians are over.

It is with us still because of institutional inertia and a lingering refusal to understand that something so powerful can be without use or value. The deterrent for which we should be aiming, as Schell writes, is "the fear of returning to a nuclear-armed world" that "would always stand guard over the treaty by which the world had eliminated nuclear weapons".

—The Guardian



Salvage excavation in Southern Ghors identifies rare Nabataean cemetery

RESCUE EXCAVATIONS in 1997 at a Nabataean cemetery in the Southern Ghors that was largely cleaned out by local tomb robbers have revealed new dimensions of life and death in 2nd Century Jordan — and have also retrieved what may be the single most complete and best preserved collection of textiles and leather from the ancient Levant.

The excavation took place at Khirbet Qazone, adjacent to the Karak-Southern Ghors road junction and across the street from the large ancient site of Bab edh-Dhra. It also turned up incredibly well preserved organic remains, including human skin, skulls with hair, and even internal organs such as dried pieces of brain. The project is directed by Dr. Konstantinos Politis of the British Museum in London, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.

Four years after the cemetery was discovered accidentally when the road was being widened, the excavation at Khirbet Qazone was initiated in 1996 in response to systematic,

large-scale looting of the cemetery by local tomb robbers who had vandalised over 3,500 shaft graves — more than 80 per cent of the entire cemetery, Dr. Politis estimates.

The site survey and excavations in 1997 showed that the tombs were all oriented in a north-south direction, and all dated from the late 2nd Century AD, according to the evidence from pottery, cloth, inscriptions, and other material remains. Twenty-four shaft tombs were studied in detail, and 22 were excavated. Each comprised a single burial laid to rest with the head facing south, in a burial chamber at the bottom of a single shaft dug nearly two metres into the natural Lisan marl.

The burial chambers are always located east of the bottom of the shaft. The space between them was sealed tightly with adobe brick slabs, plaster and stone. This created airtight, anaerobic conditions that combined with the dry conditions in the Southern Ghors to preserve the organic remains in such an unusually good state. Only a few tombs were made of stone cists, Dr. Politis said in a recent interview here.

The cemetery was that of a relatively average Nabataean community that does not seem to have been particularly wealthy. It must have lived off agriculture, trade and mineral activities (e.g., bitumen, salt, sulfur, copper), and may have been engaged in

the trade of the rare balsam plant that grows in the Dead Sea region (used to make perfume oils); ancient texts confirm that a balsam industry flourished in this region in Greco-Roman Nabataean days.

The town or settlement that used this cemetery has not been found yet. First and 2nd Century AD surface remains at the medieval Islamic sugar refining town at modern Mazra'a, near Wadi Karak, may indicate the location of the Nabataean village there, not far north of the cemetery. Other surveys in the area showed signs of the possible remains of similar 2nd Century AD cemeteries and settlements in the general vicinity. Settlements in this area were mentioned by historical writers such as Diodorus, Strabo and Josephus, Dr. Politis said.

Other Nabataean remains are well documented in the Southern Ghors, particularly military installations such as towers and fortified settlements in the Ghor es-Safi and Numera regions, further south. The Nabataeans would have used this area as a strategic passage for their commercial trading network, and also exploited the Dead Sea's minerals, including bitumen and salt. This is the first documented Nabataean cemetery in this area, though, and as such is a

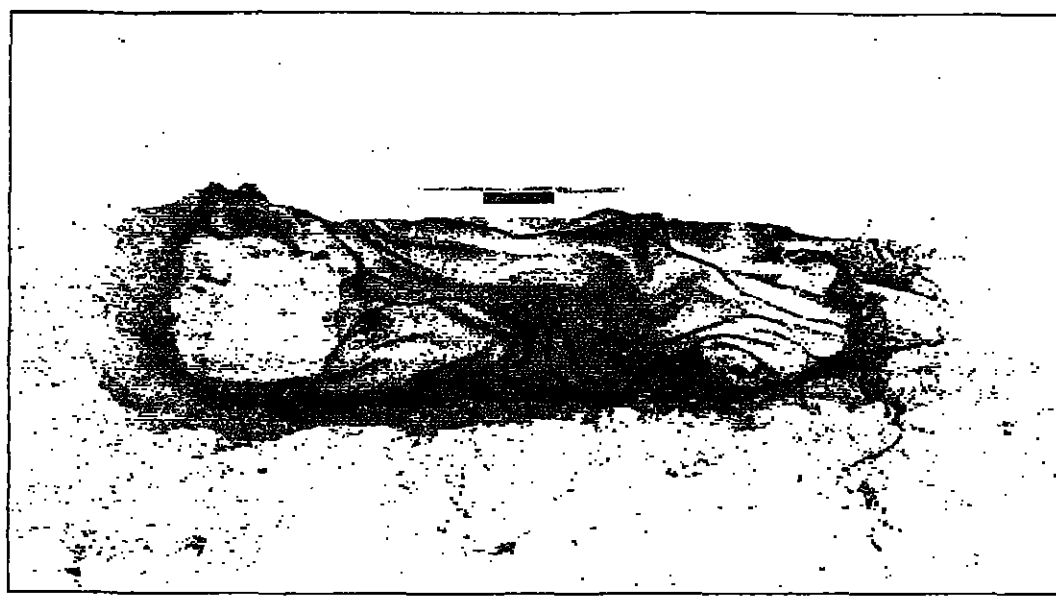
particularly important find.

Fine textiles

The most exciting aspect of the excavation was the collection of ancient textiles and leather that was recovered, and is now being restored and examined by experts at the British Museum. Some burials were wrapped in decorated and stitched leather and textile shrouds. The work last year has recovered 35 complete or partial tunics, mantels, and scarves, mainly made of wool.

"This is the biggest group of complete textiles ever recovered from the ancient Levant," Dr. Politis said. "It is significant also because it was excavated in its original archaeological context in tombs, which allows us to learn much about the technology and lifestyles of the 2nd Century Nabataeans in that area."

Also significant was the documentation of some papyrus scrolls associated with the cemetery or its still unidentified settlement; but these are not with the Department of Antiquities for they are on sale in London by black market antiquities dealers. They have been seen and photographed by Dr. Politis, and their text will provide valuable primary information about the Nabataean settlement in the



A burial in a shroud at the Qazone cemetery (photo by T. Springett, courtesy of Dino Politis)

Southern Ghors during the 2nd Century. The scrolls also attest to the rare and historically valuable nature of some of the materials that are being stolen daily from the Southern Ghors region, and sold on black markets in Jordan, Israel, neighbouring states and abroad.

The tombs had few burial goods in them. Those that were excavated included iron, copper, silver and gold earrings and bracelets, beads, a scarab, a wooden staff, a pair of leather sandals, and a laurel wreath. Other metal, pottery and glass fragments were found on the surface of the ground.

Particularly noteworthy were five funerary stelae, or marker stones, that were recovered from robbed-out tombs. Four had carved rectangular signs known as betylts, or 'Dushara blocks,' which helps confirm the Nabataean character of the community that used this cemetery. (Dushara was the chief Nabataean god who was represented as a simple rectangular stone block in the early Nabataean centuries; hundreds of such representations can be seen carved into the

monuments at Petra and other Nabataean sites). One funerary stone had a Greek inscription that read "Afseni the pretty one."



By Rami G. Khouri

The results of this salvage excavation and survey emphasise the urgency of identifying and protecting the extensive ancient remains in the Southern Ghors from the triple threats of agricultural expansion, construction, and tomb robbing, Dr. Politis said. The Department of Antiquities representative on this project is Khalil Hamdan. The project is jointly sponsored by the British Museum and the Department of Antiquities, and has been supported in part by the Jordan Valley Authority and Aramex International.



A tombstone from the cemetery at Qazone (photo by T. Springett, courtesy of Dino Politis)



Well preserved head of a Nabataean burial (photo by T. Springett, courtesy of Dino Politis)

Health

Warning: Exercise can damage your health

By Roger Dobson

GETTING FIT can seriously damage your health. Exercise may be all very well for keeping the heart and lungs in shape, but other parts of the body are losing out in the sprint to get fit.

Backs and necks are getting strained, knees damaged, ankles twisted and bones cracked by the stresses and strains of running and jogging and myriad other activities that have become popular over the last 20 years in the fight against flab.

Participants also risk getting a variety of specific problems including jogger's nephritis, runner's knee, golfer's groin, parachutist's ankle, runner's claw toe, and thrower's elbow. And even worse, there are the diseases waiting to be caught from fellow enthusiasts, from conjunctivitis to legionella. New research on the effects of exercise has found that there are hidden dangers in having too much of it, and sports medicine specialists now want the emphasis to be on quality rather than quantity.

A major problem only now being recognised is that many people embark on fitness programmes with an over-optimistic enthusiasm and assume the body is far fitter than it really is. "If healthy exercise is propagated for everyone, the message must be taken in the context that some people will take health advice to an extreme," says Professor Michael Horton, head of the bone centre at University College, London, and the organiser of a conference on the impact of exercise on the skeleton. While the density and strength of bones is boosted by exercise, too much of it can lead to a weaker skeleton as people become older. Women are particularly at risk: evidence from the U.S. shows that as many as 70 per cent of young women students who took part in college athletics had irregular menstrual cycles caused by exercise and poor diet, and as a result were building up problems of osteoporosis in later life. Bones grow and adapt to pressure by increasing the strength in those areas where it is needed. Football players have a very dense ankle structure and leg bones as a consequence both of running and of impact.

The danger of side effects from too much exercise is not the only problem facing those who want to get fit. There are risks associated with exercising while the skeleton is unfit and unprepared, and there is also the problem of choosing the right exercise. "Swimming can increase muscle mass and help with the respiratory system, but it has no effect on the skeleton. Squash on the other hand

is good because the rapid changes of movement increase bone mass. Activities with high impact and big changes in movement are best for the skeleton. Every time we put a foot on the floor the physical effect is sensed by the skeleton and it will adapt," says Professor Horton.

"One of the main problems is that if you take someone who is sedentary and put them in a training regime, then a substantial number may be at risk of injuries like stress fractures because of their immature skeleton. The message is that exercise is good for you, but your initial health has to be taken into consideration and you need to be aware that at extremes it can cause damage, particularly when taken without any preparation."

Prof. John Davies, professor of sports medicine and medical advisor to the Welsh Rugby Union, says that 90 per cent of sports injuries involve damage to soft tissue, including sprains and strains. "We see a lot of pulled muscles and stress fractures and a lot of it is down to poor technique and people going at it too hard without any graduated regime," he says.

"Choosing the right activity is important. Some people, for instance, are built for running and others are not. There are alternatives to running and there is now evidence that power walking is as beneficial but without the jarring effects."

Over time, these jarring effects can have a serious impact on the cartilage of the knee leading to arthritis, and urban joggers running on hard surfaces are thought to be most at risk. Apart from the risk of trauma and long-term bone problems, there is also the danger of picking up an infection from other enthusiasts. These infections are known collectively as the changing-room syndrome.

"In the changing room people are in close proximity to each other in a crowded, moist atmosphere, and it lends itself to the transmission of a whole range of respiratory infections — sore throats, colds, fungal infections, verucae and so on," says Prof. Greg McLatchie, professor of sports medicine at Sunderland University.

And his research shows that the most unlikely places can be sources of infection. After several swimmers and curlers at a Scottish leisure complex went down with a form of legionellosis, investigators eventually found that the airborne infection had travelled all the way along the pipes and vents of the ventilation system from a contaminated Jacuzzi.

— The Independent

The mother of all dances

If belly-dancing does not immediately spring to mind as effective pain-relief when giving birth, think again. A group of expectant mothers in London discovered it to be just that.

By Katrin Levy

A DOZEN WOMEN are tilting their hips and circling their stomachs, in time with the Eastern music. But this is no ordinary belly-dancing class: All the women are heavily pregnant.

"The movements seem very natural and comfortable and in keeping with what you could do with a huge bump out front," says Colleen Larmarque, who started the class when she was eight months pregnant. "We all felt like sexy vixens slinking around the room."

Hania Porucznik, who is teaching the class at the Active Birth Centre in London, became interested in Egyptian dance seven years ago. "I went to see a performance of it and I immediately thought, 'Yes, that's what I want to do,'" she says.

At the Active Birth Centre, the dancing is being taught as a way of alleviating back pain in late pregnancy and to help cope during labour. But, according to Hania, the benefits of belly-dancing extend beyond an easier and less painful labour. "The movements open the body up, which is useful for later on, but it's also very good for your posture, health and self-esteem."

Belly-dancing is becoming increasingly popular in Britain and Europe generally, so it was no problem for Hania to track down night classes and workshops in order to learn the

moves. "There are standard techniques that you learn, but you also bring a great deal of yourself to it," she says. "Women of any age, shape or fitness can do it, and look beautiful doing it."

However, even Hania hadn't considered the possibility of pregnant women belly-dancing until her sister-in-law, Helen Macnair, became pregnant with her first child two years ago.

"Years ago, I read an article by an American dancer who had attended a Berber birthing ceremony," recalls Hania. "A special tent had been erected especially for the birth and the men of the village were banished to the outskirts."

"The village women gathered around the pregnant woman, eating, drinking tea and listening to music. When the woman entered the first stage of labour, she started dancing and undulating her stomach around, and all her neighbours joined in, imitating her."

"After a while, when she entered the second stage of labour and got the urge to push, she went in to the middle of the tent, squatted and pushed the baby out. At the time, I just thought it was interesting, but when Helen became pregnant, I started thinking about it again."

Helen, 29, wanted to be an active participant in her child's birth.

"Throughout the pregnancy, I was doing yoga and Thai meditation with Hania, but not belly-dancing," she says. "But there was music in the background when I started going into labour, and we thought we'd try it. It was the best thing in the world. It took all the pain away."

It took seven hours in



total, from the time Helen's waters broke, to the time she gave birth, which is pretty remarkable as many first-time births can take anywhere between eight and 36 hours. "I was only in hospital for two hours, and there were no forceps, cuts or tears," Helen says. "It was painful, but the dance movements helped me to cope with the pain and kept my mind off it. The only times that it started to feel too intense was when I sat still."

Helen's experience inspired Hania to contact the Active Birth Centre to see if they would be interested in a belly-dancing class for mums-to-be. A few of the sharper Egyptian movements were inappropriate for pregnant women, but after a bit of modification, Hania was ready to give her first class.

"I had 20 women in front of me, and amazingly, they picked the movements up straightaway," she says. "It often takes non-pregnant women months to learn what to do, but the class

just seemed to have an affinity for it."

"It was lovely. They started to dance, their bodies started to move and after two minutes, every single one of them had a smile on their face and their eyes were shining."

Colleen Larmarque started the classes when she was eight months pregnant. "I'd done ballet, jazz and tap, but I hadn't belly-danced before my pregnancy," she says. "Everyone was a bit embarrassed at the beginning, but that soon evaporated and we just had a lot of fun."

Unlike Helen, Colleen experienced quite a difficult labour. But she would still recommend Egyptian dancing as a way of alleviating back pain in the last months of pregnancy, keeping supple and generally relaxing the body. This is a view that even the traditional medical establishment is starting to share.

"I've spoken to midwives in the delivery room who have been amazed at the pain relief it affords," says

Hania. "Many midwives will tell a woman in labour to stand up and circle her hips around anyway to help the baby's rotation and natural descent. So they are usually understanding of women who want to take it a little further."

Belly-dancing is not dangerous, but to be on the safe side Hania only teaches during the second trimester, once the pregnancy has stabilised, and asks participants to get the permission of their GPs before coming to the class.

"No one knows how Egyptian dance originally came about, but my experiences with teaching it have made me think that perhaps it originally started off as part of a birthing ceremony," says Hania.

"It looks like the most natural thing in the world. If something looks that beautiful, you can probably assume that it's also doing your body some good."

— The Independent

Saudi deficit set to soar to \$12 billion

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's budget deficit in 1998 is set to soar to 45 billion riyals (\$12 billion), more than double the original forecast, a study showed on Tuesday.

A Saudi BritishBank report said this year's plunge in oil prices would also push the current account into the red, while real growth in 1998 would ease to 1.7 per cent.

"The downturn in the oil price has created a different fiscal position in 1998, with the government attempting to cut back on its spending as far as it is able to do so," it said.

The state budgeted spending at 196 billion riyals and income at 178 billion riyals for 1998, forecasting an 18 billion riyal deficit. The report said this was based on

an assumed oil price of \$16.5 a barrel. Riyadh never says what oil price it expects.

Oil prices have dived to 12-year lows, and the price for Saudi crude is expected to average \$12.5, the report said. Oil accounts for about three-quarters of the kingdom's earnings.

Oil and other revenue are expected to drop 19 per cent below forecast to 145 billion riyals, while spending — despite cuts — is likely to fall three per cent to about 190 billion riyals.

Other economists have also forecast a deficit of at least 40 billion riyals for 1998.

The report said the government had little room to make cuts, as more than 85 per cent of spending covers current costs, such as wages, domestic debt repayments

and maintenance costs.

"In the absence of any real positive developments in the oil market, this situation, we suspect, will persuade the finance ministry to be cautious in the 1999 budget," it said.

The report forecast 1999 spending of 187 billion riyals, with revenue of some 155 billion, leaving a 32 billion deficit.

"The fiscal situation favours some innovative changes; increased fees and charges are not out of the question and indeed are appropriate in the push for privatisation and also 'Saudiisation' of the workforce," it said, adding that public debt could rise in 1999, but was likely to be domestic.

The kingdom provides generous welfare benefits and subsidies to citizens, but is now trying to draw

more Saudis into the private sector and is tentatively moving to sell state assets.

Gross domestic product grew by 1.9 per cent in real terms in 1997, after two years of buoyant oil prices, but the oil drop this year is likely to result in lower growth of 1.7 per cent in 1998 and 1.5 per cent in 1999, the report said.

The IMF has forecast 0.4 per cent real growth this year.

The current account, in surplus during 1996 and 1997 after a decade of deficits, is likely to slip back in the red, the Saudi BritishBank report said. It forecast a deficit of \$13.1 billion in 1998 and \$9.1 billion in 1999, based on a modest oil rise.

Inflation is estimated to reach 1.5 per cent in 1998, and forecast to rise to 1.8 per cent in 1999.

Lebanon's budget deficit widens in November

BEIRUT (R) — The gap between Lebanon's budget spending and revenues rose to its highest level in November, when expenditure exceeded income by 53 per cent, the finance ministry said on Saturday.

The ministry said in a statement that the budget expenditure in the year to November was 41.6 per cent, just inside the government's overall 1998 target of 42 per cent. The deficit was 55 per cent in November 1997.

The deficit in October was 40 per cent of the expenditure and November's increase raised fears that the government would not meet

its target in December.

The statement said that spending in November amounted to 742 billion Lebanese pounds (\$491.88 million) while revenue stood at 351 billion pounds.

Expenditure in the 11 months to November amounted to 6.979 billion pounds. This included a debt service of 2.947 billion pounds.

Central bank statistics said Lebanon's net public debt stood at 25,095.5 billion pounds at the end of October of which domestic debt was 18,922 billion pounds.

The budget deficit is the biggest economic challenge

facing the Beirut government which is seeking to attract foreign investors to the country battered by the 1975-1990 civil war.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Selim Al Hoss told reporters after he was appointed on Wednesday that his new government would use austerity measures and fiscal reforms to curb the deficit.

The 16-member government, which was announced on Friday, has a strong economic team which includes Nasser Saidi, first vice governor of the central bank, as economy trade and industry minister and Finance Minister George Kurum.

U.S. stocks rally, strong jobs data outweigh worries

NEW YORK (R) — Stocks rose broadly Friday, bouncing back on the last day of a difficult week after a strong jobs report soothed fears that the U.S. economy might be endangered by weakness in Latin America.

The Dow Jones industrial average jumped 136.46, or 1.54 per cent, to close unofficially at 9,016.14, closing back above the 9,000 mark.

"We saw very strong job numbers, so the worries about a slowing economy were brushed aside," Bill Meehan, chief market analyst for Cantor Fitzgerald, said.

The jobless rate fell to 4.4 per cent in November from 4.6 per cent in October, the Labour Department said. The number of jobs outside the farm sector climbed by a surprising 267,000.

Stocks erased much of Thursday's losses, when investors were rattled by the defeat of key pension reform in Brazil. The Dow fell 184 points on Thursday and closed at 8,879.68, ending below the 9,000 level for the first time in two weeks.

"People recognised today that while Brazil was a negative surprise, there will still be attempts to get further austerity measures there," said Tom Galvin, chief investment officer at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette. "We're closer to the end of the global currency crisis than we are to the beginning," Galvin said.

Traders and analysts said with the calming of fears about the global economy, the sell-off this week looked overdone, inviting investors to look for bargains.

For the week, the Dow slipped 316.94.

Technology stocks, especially large blue-chip issues, were among the biggest gainers. Lucent Technologies Inc. rang up gains of 7-3/8 to 95-3/4, with the stock the second most active on the New York Stock Exchange.

Intel Corp. jumped 6-13/16 to 116-5/16 after the world's largest chip-maker told Wall Street for the second time that it expects fourth-quarter revenue to grow between 8 per cent and 10 per cent from third-quarter levels, due to strong PC

demand. "Intel's comments underscore that technology as a sector, which was the first to get hurt as we went into the Asian economic crisis, is the first one re-emerging," Galvin said.

The Nasdaq composite index, which is widely used as a proxy for the technology sector, jumped 48.83 points to 2,003.16, surging 2.5 per cent and landing back above 2,000 level.

Microsoft Corp. rallied 5-1/4 to 127-3/8. Compaq Computer Corp. rose 2-4/16 to 38-9/16 after touching a new intraday high of 38-3/4.

Three initial public offerings all made very successful launches, adding to a watershed week in the IPO market, which has been generally anemic since May.

The U.S. Treasury's 30-year bond fell 20/32, yielding 5.03 per cent. Economists said the strong jobs report lessened the chances of another interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve.

The Standard & Poor's Index rose 26.64 or 2.3 per cent to 1176.74.

The Russell 2000 Index rose 3.37 points to 398.37.

Breadth on the NYSE was sharply positive, with advancing stocks nearly double decliners. There were 1,942 stocks that rose and 1,038 that fell. Volume was 716.1 million.

Another factor helping stocks, Galvin said, was that money managers have plenty of cash that needs to be put to work before the end of the year, and that with few sessions left in the year, dips were becoming even more attractive.

The Standard & Poor's composite index of 500 stocks rose 26.60 points to 1,176.74. The American Stock Exchange index added 6.68 to 660.39.

The NYSE Composite index of all listed common stocks gained 10.04 to 568.70. The average share was up 77 cents.

The Wilshire Associates Equity Index — the market value of NYSE, American and Nasdaq issues — was 10,743.650, up 200.312, or 1.90 per cent.

A.F.M. TRADE Sunday, 06-12-98

Company	Price	Change
BANKS		
ARAB BK	211.000	+0.24%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.430	+0.70%
THE HOUSING BK	2.750	+0.73%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.680	-0.60%
JO. GULF BK	0.780	-0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.880	-1.19%
JO. INVEST. BK	1.450	-0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BK	1.680	-0.00%
BANKS INDEX		
	277.400	point = +0.28%
INSURANCE		
JO. GULF INS	1.340	+5.22%
INSURANCE INDEX		
	123.880	point = +0.33%
SERVICES		
ELECTRIC POWER	1.440	+2.09%
IRIDI ELECTRICITY	1.600	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.800	0.00%
REAL ESTATE	0.780	+5.13%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.300	-3.33%
COMMODITIES	0.000	-4.83%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.840	-1.19%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS & E	1.380	-1.02%
UNION LAND DEV	0.660	-5.66%
UNIFIED LAND TRNS	1.130	-1.77%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL IN	1.070	-2.80%
SERVICES INDEX		
	103.190	point = +0.37%



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CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	SAUDI RIYAL	U.A.E. DIRHAM	BAHRAIN DINAR	OMAN RIYAL	QATAR RIYAL	KUWAIT DINAR	EGYPT POUND	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8778	1.8390	0.1844	2.3396	0.2077	0.7080
SAUDI RIYAL	5.2987	1.0000	1.0211	9.9501	9.7442	1.0302	12.3812	1.1006	3.7515
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1893	0.9793	1.0000	9.7446	9.5429	1.0089	12.1254	1.0778	3.6740
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5326	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2443	0.1105	0.3770
OMAN RIYAL	0.5438	0.1028	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	0.1057	1.2706	0.1126	0.3850
QATAR RIYAL	5.1434	0.9707	0.9912	9.8584	9.5584	1.0000	12.0182	1.0583	3.6415
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4280	0.0806	0.0825	0.6036	0.7870	0.0832	1.0000	0.0869	0.3630
EGYPT POUND	4.8145	0.9086	0.9278	9.4049	8.5338	0.9361	11.2498	1.0000	3.4087
LEBANON LIRA	21.4831	4.0544	4.1399	40.3416	39.5055	4.1769	50.1980	4.4621	15.2100
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2666	0.2722	2.6523	2.5974	0.2746	3.3003	0.2934	1.0000
G.B.RITAIN STERLIN	0.8492	0.1583	0.1637	1.5947	1.5617	0.1651	1.9843	0.1784	0.6013
GERMANY MARK	2.3651	0.4464	0.4558	4.4413	4.3464	0.4558	5.5284	0.4912	1.6748
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.8332	0.3548	0.3725	3.3302	3.2551	0.3759	4.5172	0.4015	1.3887
FRANCE FRANC	7.9315	1.4969	1.5284	14.8940	14.5857	1.5421	18.5330	1.6474	5.6155
JAPAN YEN	1.6758	0.3163	0.3229	3.1470	3.0818	0.3258	3.9158	0.3481	1.1865
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.8659	0.5038	0.5144	5.0128	4.9091	0.5190	6.3276	0.5545	1.8803
SWEDEN KRONA	11.3343	2.1381	2.1842	21.2840	20.8434	2.2037	26.4042	2.3942	6.9247
ITALY LIRA	22.4198	4.1189	4.2131	43.8795	43.0881	4.4534	54.7234	4.8944	16.9812
BELGIUM FRANC	48.8912	9.2270	9.4216	91.8097	89.9091	9.5057	114.2409	10.1546	34.6150
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2855	0.4313	0.4404	4.2918	4.2029	0.4443	5.3403	0.4747	1.5181
GREEK DRACHM	3.9823	0.7518	0.7674	7.4782	7.3234	0.7743	9.3053	0.8271	2.8195
CYPRUS POUND	3.8782	0.5432	0.5547	5.4648	5.3550	0.5566	6.7254	0.5678	1.9378
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	16.8681	3.1457	3.2120	31.2999	30.6519	3.2407	38.5472	3.4820	11.8010
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1667	0.4089	0.4175	4.0686	3.9844	0.4213	5.0627	0.4500	1.5040
EURO	1.2051	0.2274	0.2322	2.2631	2.2182	0.2343	2.8180	0.2503	0.8532

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	STERLING	GERMANY MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GUILDER	ITALY LIRA	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.6932	0.5972	0.7308	0.1781	0.0428	0.5291	0.0708	1.1722
G.B.RITAIN STERLIN	0.8013	1.0000	0.8581	0.4383	0.1071	0.0287	0.3181	0.0281	0.7021
GERMANY MARK	1.6745	2.7850	1.0000	1.2234	0.1682	0.0113	0.8860	0.0088	1.9471
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.3857	2.2784	0.8174	1.0000	0.2437	0.0136	0.7242	0.0245	1.6241
FRANCE FRANC	5.6155	9.3387	3.3535	4.1028	1.0000	0.0278	3.3667	0.0371	8.9174
JAPAN YEN	11.8500	187.3387	70.8570	86.8881	21.1200	1.0000	62.7778	0.0078	126.3718
HOLLAND GUILDER	1.8800	3.1434	1.1287	1.3808	0.3366	0.0269	1.0000	0.0139	1.5180
SWEDEN KRONA	8.0247	13.3467	4.7823	5.8630	1.2200	0.0673	4.4598	0.0054	9.4029
ITALY LIRA	16.9812	27.5779	9.9022	12.1146	2.9528	0.0079	8.7731	1.0000	14.4232
BELGIUM FRANC	34.6150	57.5717	20.6718	25.2804	6.1842	0.0240	18.3148	0.0026	40.5886
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5181	2.6913	0.9863	1.1822	0.2862	0.0651	0.7368	0.0081	1.9594
GREEK DRACHM	2.8195	4.6884	1.6718	2.0920	0.5021	0.0273	1.4918	0.0023	3.3043
CYPRUS POUND	2.0376	3.3953	1.2170	1.4589	0.3629	0.0175	1.0782	0.0026	2.5881
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	11.8010	19.6274	7.0475	8.6221	2.1015	0.0461	24.249	0.0021	13.8128
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5040	2.5513	0.8181	1.1208	0.2732	0.0616	9.2114	0.0011	1.7974
EURO	0.8532	1.4191	0.5098	0.6234	0.1519	0.0191	0.4515	0.0015	0.8532

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES

CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	5.1500	4.8000	4.7000	4.1000
G.B.RITAIN STERLING	6.7300	6.5900	6.3800	6.0000
FRANCE FRANC	3.4700	3.4300	3.3000	3.1000
GERMANY MARK	3.4700	3.3700	3.2900	3.1900
SWITZERLAND FRANC	4.0000	3.9000	3.8000	3.6000
JAPAN YEN	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	0.7080	0.7100
G.B.RITAIN STERLING	1.1700	1.1819
GERMANY MARK	1.6748	1.6823
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.3887	1.3958
FRANCE FRANC	5.6155	5.6180
JAPAN YEN	11.8500	11.8525
HOLLAND GUILDER	1.8800	1.8825
ITALY LIRA	16.9812	16.9837
EURO	0.8532	0.8557

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

1. vicin omnia
2. Beat It!
3. Dutch painter
4. Seward
5. Peninsula town
6. Nobelist Wiesel
7. nous (confidentially)
8. 1988 Masters champion
9. Richard de
10. Lion
11. Source of licorice flavor
12. Hired a crew
13. Citizen and Carol?
14. Filled collar
15. Columnist on language
16. Sale-tag disclaimer
17. Ending for a belief
18. "Growing Pains" co-star
19. Musical work
20. Wildbees!
21. Turkish titles
22. "La Vita"
23. Turkish river
24. Malleable metal
25. Burgundy wine
26. Braid
27. Inuit abbr.
28. Affirm</

Oil price plunge challenges Gulf states

By Alexandra Pironti
Deutsche Presse Agentur

DUBAI — Gulf states will open their annual summit in Dubai Monday knowing they face unprecedented social and economic challenges as a result of plunging oil prices.

The states grouped together in the Gulf Cooperation Council, will be looking to use the three-day summit to formulate a comprehensive strategy to counter the downward trend in the global oil market.

The sense of urgency is acute as the GCC — made up of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — has 45 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves and 15 per cent of world natural gas reserves. The GCC countries' main task is to find alternative sources of income to ease their dependence on oil as prices continue to fall even after reaching single-digit figures and 25-

year lows.

If nothing is done GCC states fear falling oil prices could have a destabilising influence on the social and political structures as well as bring economic hardship.

One of the GCC's key projects is to press ahead with a customs union to enable Gulf states to compete and negotiate from a position of strength with other economic blocs such as the European Union, according to GCC Secretary-General Jamil Al Hujailan.

In another move revealing the sense of urgency within the GCC, the organisation has invited leaders from outside the organisation to attend. It is the first such invitation since the GCC was founded 16 years ago.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, South African President Nelson Mandela, Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Maguid and the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, Ezzeldin Lar-

ki, have all been invited to attend this year.

On the political side, Sheikh Khalifa Ben Zayed Al Nahyan, the Abu Dhabi heir apparent and deputy commander in chief of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, said the summit would reaffirm the need to preserve Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity while emphasising non-interference in its internal affairs.

But the GCC remains distrustful of Iraq. During the weekend Al Hujailan said the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had shocked all GCC countries and created a sense of panic and a permanent obsession with the possibility of a recurrence.

To counter this fear the summit is planning to discuss a proposal from Washington that the Gulf states create a missile defensive system for the area, according to diplomatic sources in GCC countries.

The proposal for a missile shield system, which would

be developed by the United States and financed by GCC countries, was made during the visit to the area last October by U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen.

According to diplomatic sources in the United Arab Emirates, the summit will also discuss relations between Iran and the GCC countries.

The UAE is currently involved in a territorial dispute with Iran over three strategic islands in the Gulf, although relations between Tehran and the Arab Gulf states have otherwise been improving dramatically since Mohammad Khatami became Iranian president last year.

The summit will be attended by all GCC heads of state except for King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, whose place at the head of the Saudi delegation will be taken by Crown Prince Abdullah. King Fahd has not attended the last four GCC summits since he suffered a stroke in 1995.

AFM sees boost in trade in October

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Amman Financial Market's turnover in October increased by 30.9 per cent compared to the previous month, the AFM's monthly report showed Sunday.

The stock market's 60-page report, which was made available to the Jordan Times, indicated that AFM's turnover amounted to JD21.7 million compared to JD16.5 million in September.

The banking sector ranked first with a volume of JD13.8 million, or 63.4 per cent, followed

by the industrial sector which amounted to JD5 million, 23.3 per cent, services sector with JD1.9 million, 9 per cent, and finally, the insurance sector with JD942,413, or 4.3 per cent.

The report indicated that daily turnover in October amounted to JD1 million compared to JD750,188 in the previous month.

The stock market's price index, based on the shares of 60 companies, stood at 161.8 points down from 171.3 points in September, the bulletin showed.

The volume of transaction off the trading floor

recorded this year was in July, which amounted to 180.2 points.

Jordan National Bank saw the lion's share of October's trade volume with a share totalling JD7.6 million, followed by the Arab Bank with JD3.6 million, and the Jordan Phosphate Mines with JD896,810.

The parallel market's share in the turnover amounted to JD2 million, where more than 50 per cent of this figure was recorded by the industrial sector, the bulletin showed.

The volume of transaction off the trading floor

amounted to JD5.5 million, compared to JD2 million in the previous month.

Non-Jordanian ownership in shareholding companies in the stock market amounted to 43.5 per cent in October. Foreign ownership in the banking sector amounted to 56.7 per cent followed by 23.7 per cent in the industrial sector.

The report showed that the highest turnover recorded so far this year was in July, amounting to JD45 million, followed by March's trade volume of JD41 million.

Bahrain unlikely to face economic shock

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain's diversified economy is likely to shield it against the impact of the steep drop in oil prices which had hit other Gulf Arab states, bankers said on Sunday.

"Bahrain will be impacted, like other Gulf Arab states, but it does not have the bust and boom cycle. It has always followed a prudent and slow growth economy," a senior banker said.

"It has the better and well diversified economy (more) than other Gulf Arab countries. The way the government has pursued economic growth is well balanced between various sectors," he told Reuters.

Bahrain, a small and independent oil producer, has said it was cutting costs on capital projects to avoid imposing fees on services provided to the little more than half a million population, but bankers were not alarmed.

"The next two years will

be difficult, but Bahrain has proven that it can manage these adversities," the banker said.

Finance and National Economy Minister Ibrahim Abdel-Karim said last week oil income constitutes 55 per cent of Bahrain's national economy.

"Oil income makes 55 per cent of the total revenue while in some neighbouring countries it reaches 95 per cent. Bahrain is enjoying an economic diversification," Abdel-Karim said.

The island, the least wealthy of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC), produces around 40,000 barrels per day (bpd) from its own oil fields and receives around 120,000 bpd from an offshore field it shares with Saudi Arabia.

"Planning the budget for 1999-2000 comes at a very difficult time due to lower oil prices, which has resulted in a drop in our oil revenue," Abdel-Karim said.

Bankers said the 1999/2000 budget would

be different from that of previous years with tight government spendings, but vital infrastructure projects were likely to be implemented.

"Bahrain does not depend solely on oil as a major (source of) income. I think, it will be able to weather the deterioration in oil prices," a banker said, adding "Bahrain will continue to carry out development projects."

Abdel-Karim said there were problems in forecasting the 1999/2000 budget because of low oil prices, which dropped to their 12-year lows this week.

He said 260 million dinars would be earmarked for vital projects in the 1999/2000 budget starting in January 1999. Bahrain's budget usually covers two years.

Bahrain's Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa said in October the economy was sound but the island was intensifying efforts to diversify its economy away from oil.

"We are now convinced that to continue to depend on oil and gas as our main source of revenue and the prime mover of the national economy requires revision and rethinking during the coming year," he said.

Oil and Industry Minister Sheikh Isa Ben Ali Al Khalifa said last week that Aluminium Bahrain, the Middle East's biggest smelter, provides around 10 per cent of Bahrain's revenue.

Bankers said they believed that low oil prices would encourage GCC governments — Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait — to privatise main services such as power, electricity and water.

"This (weak oil prices) will encourage privatisation of services in the region. It will be a long and difficult process, but they will finally to it," a senior banker said.

Turkish textiles hit hard by Asian, Russian crises

ISTANBUL (R) — Cheap Asian competition and a loss of Russian buyers is pounding the Turkish textiles industry, and now some of the two million jobs in this vital industry are being cut as output falls.

Turkey's textile and ready-to-wear sector accounts for 39 per cent of its total industrial production, and some 10 per cent of its gross national product (GNP).

"We expect a 30 to 40 per cent drop in textile and ready-wear exports in the last quarter, but annual exports will equal last year's," Ismet Ozcan, president of the Textile Industrialists' Association (TGSD), told Reuters.

Two million people are directly employed and four million indirectly employed in the textile sector. Of Turkey's top 500 firms, 130 are textile-related.

Park Tekstil on Monday announced cutbacks, citing losses incurred by under-capacity production, falling sales abroad and other sectoral woes for its cutbacks. It announced 1.2 trillion lira (\$4 million) losses in January-September of 1998, compared with a 675.6 billion (\$2.2 million) lira profit last year.

Many other listed textile firms posted lower year-on-year profits for the first nine months of 1998. An exporters group in

the cotton-rich Aegean region said that 300 workshops in the area had closed down, with the remainder laying off close to 20 per cent of their workforce.

Turkish exports to Russia and CIS countries fell by 30.5 and 28.6 per cent respectively in the first eight months of 1998. Exports to Germany, the largest European market, fell by 1.6 per cent in the same period, according to TGSD figures.

Although a rise in exports to other European countries and the United States is expected to compensate for losses this year, further shrinkage in world markets is seen in 1999.

Sector representatives said the crises in world financial markets was particularly bad for Turkish companies, who recently made big investments in machinery following a 1995 customs union with the European Union.

Textile firms have called on the government to make available new sources of financial backing to support their exports in a hostile climate.

Turkey's leading textile workers' union has threatened a nationwide strike in 60 days if employers stick to a decision to freeze wages in the collective bargaining process.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER, MONDAY 7, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) An old friend, possibly your spouse, is leaning on your delicate buttons. Without even seeming to try, he or she will poke just about every sensitive point you've got. The object of this lesson is to lighten up. If you do, those buttons just won't function anymore. Remember that while you're getting all worked up.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a busy and complicated weekend. There's a lot to be done, and you may not know where to begin. You want to do things that will benefit the group, and yet the group doesn't seem to be clear in its direction. Make the decisions that they're all avoiding, so everyone becomes more productive.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You and your sweetheart are coming up with ideas, some pertaining to your career. You might want to take notes. Also, heed an older person's advice. The combination of a willingness to learn and move boldly is powerful. You might achieve something today you've previously only hypothesised. Go ahead and go for it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There are decisions to be made. Be patient and review the options. If you were to act on every impulse, you'd be racing in circles. Run the scenarios in your mind. Take each option and pretend you chose it. Imagine what will happen in two or three days, or years. If you keep playing this game, the best choice will become obvious.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Just when you think you have a partner figured out, he or she does something completely unexpected. There's a little financial strain, which is also unusual. Simple pleasures are best, and this week you'll find plenty of them. A gathering with close friends is the most obvious choice. And it's probably your best entertainment option.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You and your partner need to put all your cards on the table. Put your money there, too, so you can figure out how much you have. It's a good time to shop for real estate. There's one heck of a fine fixer-upper out there. If you're willing to put in a little extra work, you could save an awful lot of money.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An idea is forming in your head, and the people closest to you know what it is. They've been contributing to its design. You often do your best work with another person's input. Otherwise, you'll try one option after another, until you realise you've gone in circles and nothing's been accomplished.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a great day to listen at keyholes. Be careful not to get caught taking notes. You're not interested in blackmailing others to get what you want, but it never hurts to have a little something in reserve. For you, secrets are a bargaining chip. Just gather them all up and keep them in a safe place.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) An older person, perhaps a parent, has an agenda for you to follow. It's almost as if he or she is saying you have to do your chores before you can go play. You really do want to go play. There's some social event happening. You're just going to have to crack down and get the work out of the way as quickly as possible.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) An older person has your life pretty much figured out. You might as well go along with some gentle nagging. This person has your best interests at heart. There's a conflict between travelling and staying home, however. If you're going to travel, get started first thing this morning.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Today is good for hoping, dreaming and fantasising. It's also a good time to travel, especially on a romantic excursion. In fact, you don't even need another person to start with. You'll attract one en route. go somewhere you enjoy being. If you like hiking, for instance, go with a group. One could turn out to be a keeper.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The focus is on joint-finance, investments, and even taxes. This would be a good weekend to start those sort of projects. You generally don't have the patience. You'd rather be doing something else with your day. Perhaps you can get a Libra to help you with a stack of paperwork. It's worth a try.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Strike grounds all Air Algerie planes

ALGIERS (R) — Air Algerie staff on Sunday went on indefinite strike, grounding all the airline's 40 planes, to put pressure on managers to cancel an overhaul plan including a one-third reduction in the company's 9,000-strong workforce.

"Not a single plane has taken off or will take off from or land in any airport across the country Sunday. All the planes are grounded," a union spokesman said.

The management of the state-owned airline was not immediately available to comment.

The company's pilots, technicians and airport workers staged a 13-day-long strike on October over the same issue.

The management then at first said there was no overhaul plan, but then conceded that there were restructuring proposals

and said it wanted to secure the union's agreement before they were implemented.

"Actually, the result of our strike on October was to force the management to acknowledge that the restructuring plan existed. This time, we want it scrapped because it threatens the company future and jobs," the union official said.

In addition to its extensive domestic network, Air Algerie flies mostly to Europe, North Africa and some Middle Eastern countries.

Most foreign airlines have been staying away from Algeria since 1994 when five rebels hijacked a plane, killing three passengers before being gunned down by troops.

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Singapore starts giant push for soccer World Cup 2010

SINGAPORE (DPA) — The tiny island city-state of Singapore has kicked off a giant-sized national campaign to qualify for the soccer World Cup finals by the year 2010, a news report said Sunday.

"There is tremendous support for this national project. And, given the political will, I am sure we can succeed," the Straits Times newspaper quoted Football Association of Singapore chairman Ibrahim Othman as saying.

"There is no guarantee that we will succeed. But to not even try would be a sin," Ibrahim said Saturday at a national forum packed with government ministers, sports officials and soccer fans. Though soccer is tremendously popular with Singapore's 3 million people, the country has faced a number of struggles with the sport.

Singapore pulled its national team out of the passionately-followed international Malaysia Cup competition

three years ago after a series of match-fixing scandals.

Since then, a new domestic league pitting suburban teams against each other has met with a lukewarm response from fans, poor spectator turnout and other problems.

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, in a National Day rally address earlier this year, encouraged his people to accept foreign immigrants to make the country more competitive in the economic arena — and on the soccer field — noting that imported talent had helped France beat Brazil in this year's World Cup.

"Last year I told you that Singapore would never have a chance in the World Cup, because the rules require all players to be citizens," Goh said.

"But... maybe if we change our immigration criteria to bring in top football talent and make them citizens, then one day we too can get into the finals," Goh added. "In fact we intend

to do this, to bring in sports talent."

An official task force heading up the country's "Goal 2010" programme faces daunting obstacles, including skepticism among Singaporeans and a fiercely competitive education system that frightens.

"A father wants his son to play football, but if Mother says 'no,' it's no," Jeffrey Low, a Singapore sports reporter and member of a committee charged with bringing the soccer standard up by 2010, said in the Straits Times report.

Proposed moves in the Goal 2010 quest include a "soccer academy," soccer scholarships and overseas training for promising young players, starting formal coaching at age 6, better media coverage to market local soccer and a drive to make sports more socially acceptable as a profession in the hard-working, conservative Asian country.

Tapia takes bantam title

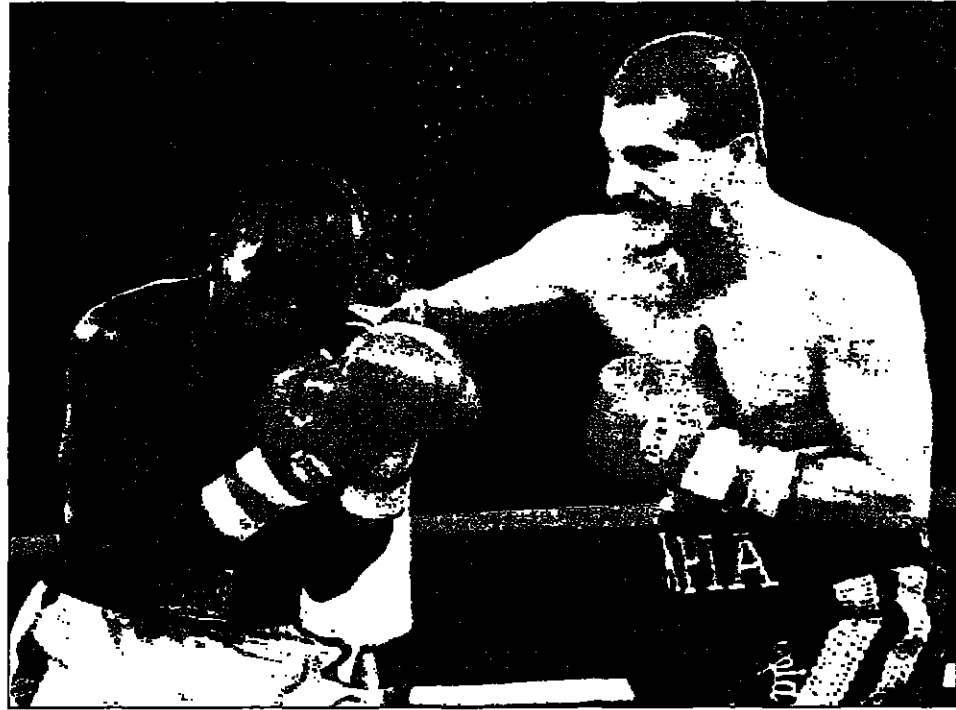
ATLANTIC CITY (R) — Johnny Tapia remained unbeaten as he moved up a division and captured the World Boxing Association bantamweight title Saturday night with a majority decision over Nana Yaw Konadu of Ghana.

Climbing up one weight class, reigning International Boxing Federation junior bantamweight champion Tapia overcame a bad cut over his right eye caused by an accidental head butt in the second round and put on a boxing clinic in depositing Konadu.

One judge scored it a draw, with the other two giving Tapia a comfortable edge on points.

Tapia improved to 45-0-2, while Konadu lost for just the second time in six years and fell to 39-4-1.

Using his trademark stick-



IBF and WBO World bantamweight champion Johnny Tapia, right, lands a right to the jaw of WBA World bantamweight champion Nana Konadu during their championship bout at the new Atlantic City, N.J., Convention Center (AP Photo)

and-move style, Tapia won nearly every one of the first 10 rounds as the veteran Konadu was unable to adjust to Tapia's speed.

Konadu recorded a flash knockdown midway through the 11th when referee Frank Cuppochino ruled a slip as a knockdown. Tapia was up immediately and, angered by the ruling,

pressed the action. "It was a slip. I was never knocked down," Tapia said. Konadu felt Tapia did not do enough to take away his title.

"I am the champion, he is the challenger," Konadu, the former World Boxing Council flyweight champion, said through an interpreter. "He is supposed to

knock me down. He didn't knock me down. That's how I know I won the fight."

Tapia gave Konadu his due. "I fought a strong fighter," said Tapia. "A couple of shots he threw rocked me." Tapia, however, was pleased by his performance. "Coming up in weight, I had a lot to prove."



Italian player Andrea Gaudenzi (C, background) congratulates the Swedish team as coach Carl Axel Hageskog embraces player Magnus Norman after Swedish pair Nicklas Kulti and Jonas Bjorkman defeated their Italian opponents Diego Nargiso and Davide Sanguetti in three sets 7-6 (7/1), 6-1, 6-3 in the Davis Cup final in Milan. The Swedish pair's victory gave the team an unbeatable 3-0 lead and the Scandinavian country's seventh Davis Cup victory (AFP photo)

Mallorca lead, Barcelona lose again

MADRID (DPA) — Mallorca remained on top of the Spanish first division thanks to a hard-fought 1-0 home win Saturday night over Javier Clemente's defensive Betis.

Deportivo Coruna moved up to second place, two points behind Mallorca, thanks to a dramatic 2-1 defeat of troubled Barcelona. Barca's third successive defeat may well have earned embattled Luis Van Gaal the sack.

Celta Vigo fell to third after allowing Salamanca to snatch a late draw. Atletico Madrid dropped to fourth as a result of their goalless draw against Athletic Bilbao. Weary world champions Real Madrid moved up to fifth by drawing away to Espanyol, above hapless Barcelona on goal differences.

In Palma, Clemente predictably tried to stifle Mallorca with a cautious 5-4-1. But Hector Cuper's team broke through several times in the first half, only for Toni Prats to pull off sharp saves from Leonardo Biagini and Lauren Bisan.

Mallorca continued to lay siege to the Betis goal after the break. Their insistence was rewarded eight minutes from time. Jovan Stankovic swung over a clever corner, Marcelino Elena headed on to Dani Garcia, who beat Prats with a close-range header. Two minutes from time the in-form Dani hit the crossbar with another intelligent header.

The capacity crowd celebrated the win in the

knowledge that their attractive team would stay top, no matter what their pursuers did later in the evening.

The only one of their pursuing pack to win was Deportivo, far superior to a Barcelona desperately short of confidence. As usual, Ruud Hesp was Van Gaal's hero with another series of important saves.

Fifteen minutes from time, though, there was nothing that Hesp could do to keep out a powerful far-post volley from Mustapha Hadji. Barca poured forward for an equaliser which would have saved Van Gaal's neck, at least for another week. Two minutes from time Patrick Kluivert was brought down by Nourredine Naybet for a clear penalty, calmly put away by ex-Deportivo favourite Rivaldo.

There was to be a cruel sting in the tail, though, for the hapless Van Gaal. Two minutes into injury time, Jose Flores broke free down the left and centred for veteran Fran Gonzalez who smashed home a well-deserved winner.

Celta looked likely to stay in second place. A fifth-minute strike from man-of-the-match Mazinho put them into the lead in Salamanca. They squandered good chances to settle the issue then naively allowed the tiny Martin Cardetti to head in an equaliser just three minutes from time.

Athletic Bilbao managed to do in Madrid what Betis failed to do in Palma and what Barca failed to do in Coruna — battle out a goalless draw. Luis

Fernandez' erected a brick wall to keep out an Atletico blunted by the absence of Spain striker Kiko Narvaez.

Visiting goalkeeper Imanol Etxeberria did even better than Prats. He was helped by the referee, who, on the hour, wrongly ruled Jose Mari Romero offside then failed to see Etxeberria bring down the young forward for a clear penalty.

Real Madrid, tired after their exertions in Tokyo, were just as pleased as Athletic to battle out a goalless draw. Guss Hiddink decided to rest Fernando Hierro, Roberto Carlos, Fernando Redondo, Predrag Mijatovic and Savio, with one eye on Wednesday's Champions League against Spartak Moscow.

Espanyol dominated from start to finish but were denied by Bodo Illgner and by the woodwork. Ten minutes before the interval Moises Arteaga slammed a volley against the crossbar. On the hour the lively Juan Eduardo Esnaider saw his powerful shot come back off Illgner's post.

Real have picked up just four points from their last four matches, but were nonetheless pleased with the draw.

In Saturday's other match, goals from Oscar De Paula and Inigo Idiazek took Real Sociedad to a comfortable home win over lowly Extremadura.

Results: Real Sociedad 2, Extremadura 0; Mallorca 1, Betis 0; Deportivo Coruna 2, Barcelona 1; Athletic Bilbao 0, Salamanca 1; Celta Vigo 1, and Espanyol 0. Real Madrid 0.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Men's Downhill postponed

WHISTLER, MOUNTAIN, British Columbia (DPA) — Bad weather again forced the postponement of the season-opening men's World Cup downhill race Saturday at Whistler Mountain in Canada's British Columbia province. The event, delayed from Friday, has been rescheduled. The super giant slalom, which was to be held Sunday at Whistler Mountain, was cancelled. It was rescheduled to December 12 in Val d'Isere, France.

Tyson will return Jan. 16

LAS VEGAS (DPA) — Former world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson will announce his plans at a news conference next Tuesday to return to the ring on January 16 in a fight against Francois Botha, news reports said Saturday. The bout would mark Tyson's first appearance in the ring in 20 months. Last month his boxing licence was reinstated by Nevada's state boxing commission. He already has signed a deal to fight Francois Botha at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Tyson was suspended by the Nevada commission after he bit heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield's ears in a July 1997 title fight that was a rematch of a previous bout that Holyfield also won. In 1992, Tyson was convicted of raping a beauty contest participant in Indiana. He was imprisoned for three years.

Plyushchenko earns perfect 6.0

SAPPORO, Japan (R) — Russian Evgeny Plyushchenko earned one perfect score of 6.0 for his free skating programme on his way to victory in the NHK Trophy on Sunday. The world bronze medalist, who had led after the short programme, opened with a clean quadruple/triple toe loop and followed it immediately with a triple axel/triple toe loop. Five more clean triples followed, one in a jump sequence, together with lightning fast step sequences and excellent spins including his trademark Biellman. He was rewarded with eight marks of 5.9 for technique and one perfect 6.0 and six 5.9s for presentation. "It was the first 6.0 I have received," said Plyushchenko. The NHK Trophy results meant that Canadian Elvis Stojko also qualified for the final.

China, S. Korea break records

BEIJING (R) — China and South Korea have shattered the men's 5,000-metre short-track speed skating world record at a World Cup event in Beijing, the official Xinhua news agency said on Sunday. Hosts China clocked 6:51.930 in the semi-finals on Saturday, shattering the previous mark of 7:00.042 by over eight seconds, it said. South Korea finished in 6:53.61, Xinhua said.

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Thai king opens Asian Games

BANGKOK (AP) — In rites building from low flares symbolising dawn to a fiery cauldron lighting, Thailand's king opened the Asian Games Sunday night, giving Thais some respite from an economic crisis that once threatened the continent's Olympic-style event.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the world's longest-reigning monarch, was upstaged slightly by Japan's Naoko Takahashi. In a marathon run in early morning, to avoid the worst of Bangkok's tropical heat, she won the games' first gold medal in a time just one minute off the world record.

Her medal ceremony immediately preceded the official opening festivities for two weeks of competition among 6,000 athletes from 41 nations. In all, 377 gold medals are at stake in 36 sports, including Asian specialties such as kabaddi and sepak takraw.

But the king not only made the key proclamation and released the royal pigeon, he also anointed a plaque for the Royal Main Stadium and composed some of the music. Songs written by the king, a talented jazz composer, were played by the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra.

Thai officials who approached him at the ceremony did so on their knees. Others greeting the king included International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch.

A cascade of fireworks in honour of his 71st birthday

Saturday and dancers who prostrated themselves on the field welcomed the monarch to his seat in the royal box.

Then came the athletes, starting with Cambodia and ending with the host Thai team. Saudi Arabia, which withdrew its team at the last minute, was represented by only a flag bearer.

The Sri Lankan team was led by six dancers in bright costumes, who delighted the crowd in the 60,000-seat stadium with acrobatic manoeuvres.

Each team was led by a Thai beauty queen holding its signboard. After the parade, five of the women collapsed, and three were taken out on stretchers.

A giant cauldron atop the stadium was lit by touching a torch to a smaller cauldron inside a model of a temple, which then was lifted on an elevator and sent an explosion of sparks into the games' flame receptacle.

Outside the stadium before the ceremony, long lines of people waited to take photos of themselves in front of a plastic statue of the games' elephant mascot, "Chai-yo."

One, Sakchai Pongrinnon, a 30-year-old piping engineer, who paid 1,000 baht (\$26) for his ceremonies many problems. For two weeks, maybe we can forget about all these problems.

Several thousands people without tickets milled around outside, waving small Thai flags and waiting for a glimpse of the king. Security measures included bomb-sniffing dogs.

For the competing nations



President of the Olympic Council of Asia Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah (C) hands over the torch of the 13th Asian Games to a Thai official at Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium 06 December during the opening ceremony of the games. Athletes from 41 countries will compete during the 6-20 December Games (AFP photo)

First event jams Bangkok's notorious traffic

BANGKOK (R) — The Asian Games' first event on Sunday also set off the first traffic jam of the tournament.

Many spectators, journalists and athletes commuting to the main Games complex at Thammasat University on the outskirts of Bangkok were forced to leave vehicles when they were caught in gridlock caused by the women's marathon.

Streets were blocked off for the event leading to queues of traffic up to five kilometres long.

Games spokesman Torpong Sewatarnvovoked the traffic jam would be the last of the

December 6-20 event.

"We don't expect any problems this afternoon for the Opening Ceremony. Or any other day," he said.

Bangkok's notorious traffic jams have been a major worry for Game organisers. About 10,000 police are on Bangkok's streets trying to keep traffic moving.

Schools and universities have been given special holidays for the two-week duration of the Games to help keep vehicles off the roads and spectators have been asked to take public transport to events.

— many sending reduced teams to ease the pinch of the Asian crisis — the games are a proving ground for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

"It's not just getting a gold, it's getting a gold with a result that is close or at world

standards," said Li Furong, deputy head of China's Asian Games delegation.

"The main target is the 2000 Olympics."

Sunday's focus was more on pageantry beginning with slightly 0909 GMT, reflecting popular belief that nine is

a lucky number. Bhumibol is the ninth king of the current dynasty.

The three-hour ceremonies featured 7,614 performers in lavishly produced acts with the theme "Friendship Beyond Frontiers."

Performers in ancient Thai

garb paraded across the field, followed by people-drawn chariots. A martial arts display celebrated Asian unity, and hundreds of primary school students dressed in colourful outfits introduced the games' mascot.

Parts of the ceremony were built around the Indian Ramayana epic, the basis for much of traditional Thai mythology, literature and performing and fine arts. The field became a swirl of giant snakes, swans, birds, angels, and other mystical creatures.

Another performance celebrating the unity of Asia was to cap the show, with four large swan floats pulled to the middle of the field, each tethered to a giant balloon symbolising the sun, moon, earth and a giant lotus.

The combined budget for the opening and closing ceremonies was 70 million baht (\$1.94 million), including a large share of donated and at-cost labour — part of Thailand's remedy for over-coming financial problems that hit the games.

In warming up the audience before the ceremonies, a Thai comedian joked: "If you're Saudi, raise your hand."

Saudi Arabia withdrew from the games at the last minute, throwing some of the scheduling into disarray. It cited a national holiday and the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, but many Thais saw the move as retaliation for the failure of Thai police to solve a number of serious crimes against Saudi citizens.

Japanese runner starts Games off with near-record marathon

BANGKOK (AP) — Japan's Naoko Takahashi staged her own opening ceremony for the Asian Games Sunday, winning the first gold medal with a marathon time just one minute off the world record.

To avoid the worst of Bangkok's tropical heat, the women's marathon was started at 6:30 a.m. (2330 GMT Saturday), more than 13 hours before King Bhumibol Adulyadej formally declared the opening at ceremonies with trumpet fanfares and royal fireworks.

The tiny 26-year-old Japanese received her medal at the ceremonies' stadium, 40 minutes before the start of the opening ceremony. Children's games, temple bells, epic anime drama and a symbolic dawn all figured in the rites that followed.

Takahashi needed just two hours, 21 minutes, 47 seconds to finish the 42.195 kilometres — 13 minutes better than the second-place runner — and might have gone faster if temperatures had not started rising into the 30s Celsius (90s F).

After the fifth best women's marathon time every, Takahashi said that "at 20 kilometres, I didn't intend to lose the pace but my body wouldn't keep going properly. I wasn't expecting a world record here but it's true that I'll look back and think I could have done much better over the last 10 kilometres."

Kenya's Tegla Loroupe set the world record of 2:20:47 in Rotterdam this year, and her coach, Oshio Kaida, said that "with her ability now she can break the record any time the conditions are good."

Her time shattered the Asian record of 2:24:07 set by China's Wang Junxia in 1993 and was far faster than the old games record of 2:29:32 set by China's Zhong Huangdi in 1994.

This race changes marathon history. I believe she is the fastest runner in the world at the moment," said Shigeru So, chief of the Japanese athletic federation's athlete development programme for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Japan missed a 1-2 sweep when North Korea's Kim Chang outsped Tomoko Kai over the final 100 metres in the main stadium. Kim took the silver in 2:34:55, and Kai the bronze in 2:35:01.

It was the North Koreans' first Asian Games medal in eight years. They skipped

the 1994 games in Hiroshima, Japan.

Japanese delegation leader Teruji Kogake said, "Getting a gold and a bronze in the very first event of the games should be an inspiration to the others. Receiving their medals before everyone at the opening ceremony is certain to move the others."

While the women's marathon racers won the first medals, they were not the first to start action at the games.

The original field of 23 soccer teams has been playing for a week to narrow the field to 16 teams for the second round, opening Monday.

The survivors are Turkmenistan, South Korea, China, Lebanon, Japan, India, Qatar, Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, North Korea, Thailand, Oman, Uzbekistan, Kuwait, Iran and Kazakhstan.

Those eliminated were Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, the Maldives, Hong Kong, Mongolia and Laos.

Among Monday's games is a contest between arch-rivals South in advance of their co-host roles for the 2002 World Cup finals. A loss at this round robin stage would not necessarily lead to elimination from medal contention.

Preliminary competition also began Sunday for snookers, making its Asian Games debut, and tempers quickly flared over a game between longtime Asian rivals India and Pakistan.

India's protests over a foul call led to a 15-minute halt to play, and spectators attuned to the sport's strict etiquette were aghast when Indian team members used a snooker table as a platform to write a protest letter.

India's Yashin Merchant went on to defeat Pakistan's Mohammad Saleh 5-4, and both sides' protests were thrown out because neither paid the required \$50 filing fee, officials said.

In all, 377 gold medals are at stake in 36 sports. Some 6,000 athletes from 41 nations are competing in Asia's version of the Olympics, even though Asia's financial crisis has forced some nations to curtail their entries.

The men's marathon is scheduled for the closing day, Dec. 20.

Jordan competes in taekwondo, weightlifting today

By Aileen Bannayan in Amman and JSYIF reporters in Bangkok

JORDAN HOPES to achieve its first Asian gold when the taekwondo competition starts Monday at the Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand, which opened Sunday with 6,000 athletes from 41 nations taking part.

Jordan's sole Asian Games medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals in Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94 Games.

The taekwondo team, fresh out of a ten-day training camp in Taiwan, is favoured to secure medals again. The team is headed by Ibrahim Agil, who won the gold medal at the recently concluded World Military Games in Houston, Texas.

The rest of his teammates were also medal winners at the last Pan-Arab Games in Beirut. Those include gold medalist Hussein Tahleh, silver medalist Mohammad Abul Ruz, Zaha Talhouni, Nancy Hindi, and bronze medalist Ahlam Bino.

Also Monday, Ayed Khawaldeh starts competition in weightlifting's 56-kilogramme category. Khawaldeh was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the Pan-Arab Games in Beirut and is one of the athletes favoured to win medals at the Games.

The draw for the boxing event takes

place Monday with 27 nations entered in the event.

Jordan's delegation pins high hopes on Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals at the 8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and Jordan's only gold at the 18th Arab Boxing Championships which concluded in Tunisia recently.

The boxing team also includes Pan-Arab Games boxing gold medal winner Ayman Nadi, and bronze medalist Basel Hindawi. The gymnastics competition also starts today with countries such as China and Kazakhstan favoured to clinch for most medals.

In judo, Jordan's Rami Dasouqi has a tough match against Asian and World gold medalist from Japan.

The Kingdom's 36-member delegation raised the Jordanian flag at the athletes village Sunday, while the rest of the delegation arrived in Bangkok according to their competition schedule.

On the sidelines of the event, Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice-Chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz will head the country's delegation at the meetings of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

Jordanian officials will update the OCA Arab state members on preparations for the Pan-Arab Games and urge fellow ministers to support the West Asian Games.

They will also meet officials from the

organising committee of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as Japanese Olympic officials charged with sports marketing who would be beneficial in that aspect of the Pan-Arab Games.

Jordan Handball Federation President Sari Hamdan also arrived in Bangkok to follow up on Jordan's recent complaint of disqualification from the World Cup handball finals where Saudi Arabia took first place while Jordan came second on points with Kuwait and Bahrain.

The organising committee gave Kuwait the runner-up spot after disqualifying Bahrain on a technicality.

In another area of the Games, Jordan's Samer Kamal will be officiating taekwondo matches alongside 22 other referees.

The Kingdom has 19 officials and 37 athletes in the last sporting event of the century where only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are missing the event. Jordan is competing in 11 sports: athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

Prior to departure, JOC Secretary General Ismat Kurdi underlined the importance of taking part in the Asian Games saying it was "part of plans of the Ministry of Culture and Youth to prepare teams for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics."

"It is an invaluable chance to assess our teams and pinpoint our location on the map of Asian sports," Kurdi added.

Jordan is represented by the best athletes in their respective sports: The athletics team includes Fakhreddin Fuad — a gold medalist in the Pan-Arab Games high jump.

The team just concluded a training camp in Qatar where Fuad achieved 315 centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53 — 18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

The delegation includes judo's silver medalist Musa Khalaf, swimming's bronze medalist Hana Majaj, karate bronze medalist Butheina Mahsiri.

Jordan will not be taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball.

The national teams of these sports were negatively affected after their federations had their share of controversial issues to deal with. The basketball board declined participation after the freezing of all basketball activities following the federation's resignation which was retracted at a later stage.

The handball federation declined after Jordan achieved 9th place among 11 teams at the Arab Cup in Cairo.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Eligible suppliers may obtain free summary informations document about the project from the abovementioned address.

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Prosecutor orders release of Egyptian rights activist

CAIRO — Egypt's state security prosecutor ordered Sunday the release of a leading human rights activist sent to jail five days ago for allegedly receiving money from a foreign country to damage Egypt's reputation.

Hafez Abu Saada, Secretary General of the country's oldest human rights group, the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR), was sent to prison on Tuesday for 15 days. He was charged with receiving money from a foreign country without government permission and of spreading false information that allegedly harmed Egypt's national interests.

Abu Saada's release followed a campaign of protest by local and international human rights groups who described this arrest as an attempt to "terrorise human rights groups."

Several prominent columnists in pro-government newspapers also called for Abu Saada's release, saying his imprisonment would only prove true the claims made by human rights organisations about the lack of respect for human rights and of police brutality in Egypt.

Nehad Abu-Al Qumsan, Abu Saada's wife and a lawyer, said recalling her husband for a second round of questioning by the state security prosecutor on

Sunday before the first 15 days were over, was "an indication that the government felt embarrassed by his arrest and decided to release him immediately."

She added that Abu Saada was released on bail after paying \$150 which implied that the case against him was to continue.

But Gasser Abdul Razek, director of the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), said "many political cases in Egypt just die down over time. The government's aim was to deliver a message to human rights activists on what it could do to them if they misbehaved."

EOHR issued a report in late September alleging that police forces, while investigating a murder in a small, mainly Coptic village in south Egypt, arrested 1,200 people and subjected them to various means of brutal torture to give confessions.

The government ignored the report at that time, but became angry when a British newspaper picked up the story a month later, adding allegations that some of the village's Christian residents were raped and crucified.

Two weeks ago the editor of a "independent" weekly newspaper published a photocopy of a \$25,000 cheque, saying that it was paid to the EOHR by the British embassy in Cairo to write its

report on the village. He also filed a complaint to the state prosecutor.

Abu Saada, before his arrest, denied the charge and provided documents clarifying that the money was the second installment to fund a project going on since 1995 to provide legal assistance to women and handicapped children.

"He was kept in a disciplinary, solitary confinement cell measuring 1.80x1.80 metres for two days and soldiers forcibly shaved all his hair the second day after his arrest," she said.

Abu Saada was also not allowed any food or visits by his family or lawyers until Saturday, she added.

The EOHR director was due to leave to Paris on Tuesday to take part in celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. His wife said that he would still try to go, if allowed to by authorities.

"The government found out that keeping Abu Saada in prison will cause more damage, especially that his case was going to be highly publicised at the Paris meeting," said CHRLA director, Abdul Razek.

"We are winning and not losing. The number of people who wrote to express solidarity and sympathy with us is indeed a victory," he added.

Iraq says U.S. wants to control Arab World

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan on Sunday accused the United States of seeking to control the Arab World.

"America, which leads the international hegemony, is endeavouring to control the Arab Nation," the Iraqi News Agency (INA) quoted Ramadan as telling members of the General Secretariat of the International Federation of Arab Labour Unions.

"Workers are at the forefront of the conscientious slice of society who are able to intercept this hegemony," Ramadan said.

The United States led an international military coalition which drove occupying Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in 1991. It has also been the most vocal advocate for maintaining sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of the oil-rich emirate.

Ramadan also called for boosting the Arab economy, improving performance of workers and helping them move easily among Arab countries.

"This would not be realised unless the nation is free in its economy," he said. "Iraq, after eight years of sanctions managed to surpass the state of limited capabilities by fulfilling a number of projects."

Iraq is pressing the Arab

countries to help break the eight-year sanctions which have crippled an economy long dependent on oil exports.

In another development, Britain said on Sunday it would maintain its military presence in Kuwait until Iraq complied fully with United Nations resolutions.

"We have decided that we are going to be here and make quite sure what was agreed in the middle of November by [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein is done," British Chief of the Defence Staff General Charles Guthrie told reporters.

"We think it is crucial we are here... We have no plans for reducing the numbers here and we are here until a satisfactory outcome of the situation," he added.

Guthrie was speaking to reporters just south of the border with Iraq at this Kuwaiti air base where Britain has twelve Tornado warplanes deployed since the previous crisis with Iraq which was resolved diplomatically in February.

In November some of the British Tornados were on standby for military action against Iraq in another crisis with the United Nations over arms inspections, but the United States and Britain called off the strikes when Iraq decided to meet the demands of the world body.

Taliban silent on reports of Ben Laden murder bid

ISLAMABAD (R) — Afghanistan's Taliban movement kept silent at the weekend on media reports that its fighters killed four men hired to assassinate its "guest," alleged terrorism mastermind Osama Ben Laden.

The reports said that the four "hired agents" were intercepted two kilometres from Ben Laden's hideout in southern Afghanistan two weeks ago and were killed.

"The Taliban are convinced that the effort was masterminded and financed by Washington, which has been trying to get Ben Laden since he was implicated in the Khobar bombing case in Saudi Arabia," the English-language Friday Times reported.

The reports surfaced four months after the United States launched cruise missiles at suspected Ben Laden training camps in southern Afghanistan. He survived the attacks.

The Islamist militia was also silent on a report in the London-based Al Hayat news-

paper which said Ben Laden was ready to leave Afghanistan for refuge in Shishan, the breakaway Russian region.

By its account, a Shishani foreign ministry official, Abdul Wahid Ibrahim, arrived in the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar several days ago to discuss opening diplomatic relations and the status of the man the Taliban calls a guest.

Other reports said a delegation from Yemen, where Ben Laden had lived before, was in Afghanistan for talks on Ben Laden. There was no reaction from the Taliban, either from its spiritual capital of Kandahar or the battered administrative capital of Kabul, to the reports.

Al Hayat's story coincided with stories in the Pakistani media and in the exiled Afghan community that Washington's public enemy number one survived an assassination bid at the hands of four exiled Afghans, including an ex-opposition faction commander.

Pro-Kurd party members arrested in Istanbul

ANKARA (DPA) — Police in Istanbul on Sunday arrested 105 members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party which launched a three-day hunger strike across Turkey in protest of a police crackdown on the party last month.

The report by Anatolia news agency did not say on what charges the hunger strikers had been detained, adding that police were keeping HADEP buildings in the city under close observation.

HADEP Deputy Chairman Osman Ozelik said earlier their protest was a passive response to the arrest of their chairman and leading members.

"We are protesting in the most innocent manner the injustice done to our party," he told reporters in Ankara.

HADEP Chairman Murat Bozlak was imprisoned and thousands of party members and supporters were detained by police last month, following hunger strikes launched in party buildings to protest the possible extradition to Turkey of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

"We need to modernise our press institutions and provide them with the necessary financing..." he

Tarawneh government's popularity rises among opinion-makers, drops among public — CSS poll

(Continued from page 1)

As for former premier Majali, the percentage of 42.2 among the general public that viewed his government as highly capable in March 1997 shrank to 27.9 in June of the same year.

Opinion leaders who believed the Majali government was highly capable were 32.3 per cent at its appointment, but decreased to 26.3 100 days afterwards.

Some analysts believe that the rise in popularity among opinion leaders was a reflection of a good media approach that the Tarawneh government has adopted during its first one-hundred days in office.

"Confronted with problems and allegations, the



FACE OF AFRICA: The three winners of M-Net's Face of Africa competition pose for photographers on Saturday at the Mena House Oberoi Hotel in Cairo. First place is Egyptian 18-year-old Naira Al Sheikh, right, second place is Moroccan 19-year-old Ikram Ben Daoud, centre, and third place is Eritrean 20-year-old Behlu Elias. The first place winner is awarded an international modelling contract with Elite Model Management Worldwide (AP photo)

Weizman pins hopes on Clinton trip

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman said Sunday he hoped President Clinton would pull Middle East peace-making out of the mud on a visit next week.

"While the matter for the moment is encountering hardships, I believe it's right for him to come here not only for celebrations, but rather to see if he can do something to move the cart out of the mud," Weizman said.

Israeli media said Israeli officials were upset at the high profile Clinton was giving to the first-ever visit by a U.S. president to Palestinian-ruled territories.

"No doubt the visit will

be very important and strategic, it means so much to the Palestinian people," Palestinian President Yasser Arafat told reporters in self-ruled Gaza.

Clinton's Dec. 12-15 trip also includes Israel.

Weizman, whose job is largely ceremonial, spoke to reporters while on a condolence call to the family of an Arab killed in Jerusalem last week by a suspected Jewish serial stabber.

"The process is a correct process and if there are mines here and there, we must remove them and go forward," Weizman said while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet met to demand

Palestinians halt violent clashes with Israeli forces.

Under the U.S.-brokered peace deal, Israel last month began a gradual three-month handover of 13 per cent of the West Bank and release of 750 prisoners in return for Palestinian security and political measures.

Palestinians have voiced frustration at Israel's expansion of Jewish settlements on land occupied since the 1967 Middle East war and at its release of criminals rather than political prisoners.

"To hell with the agreements, if they are going to be an umbrella for settlements," Ahmad Qureia, speaker of the Palestinian

Legislative Council, told reporters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Netanyahu announced last week he was suspending the transfer of more West Bank territory after an attack by Palestinians on an Israeli soldier and a civilian in the West Bank.

Israel wants Arafat to halt "incitement," promise not to declare an independent state next May, and announce that Israel never agreed to free jailed Palestinians with "blood on their hands."

Israel said the next land transfer, due shortly after Clinton's visit, was contingent on its conditions being met.

Syria press chief to improve press laws

DAMASCUS (R) — The chairman of Syria's journalists' union, Saber Falhout, newly elected to the People's Assembly (parliament), pledged on Sunday to modernise and improve the country's press laws.

Falhout, the first head of the union to enter the assembly since the revival of Syria's parliament 24 years ago, said he would also work to improve the management of the economy to help it keep pace with world developments.

His election to Syria's highest legislative body "... means that the legislative and fourth estate [press] authorities would cooperate to observe closely the activities of the executive bodies, to correct any mistakes," he told Reuters in an interview.

"We need to modernise our press institutions and provide them with the necessary financing..." he added. "We need to have better training for our journalists to allow them to adapt to the new world journalism era."

Falhout was one of 167 candidates of the ruling coalition who secured assembly seats in elections last week. The remaining 83 seats in the 250-seat body went to independent members, mostly wealthy businessmen.

Despite not spending a lot of money printing election posters and leaflets, as some other candidates did, Falhout scored the largest number of votes in his election district.

"My nomination by the leadership and my direct election by the people means everybody wants to improve the role of journalism and the media in the country," he said.

Asked what he expected from the assembly's future discussions on Syrian peace talks with Israel, Falhout said he was not optimistic about any move to revive the talks, which broke off in early 1996.

Falhout, who was a member of the Syrian negotiating team, blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the current deadlock.

"As long as there is a person in power in Israel like Netanyahu, who is refusing to recognise the rights of others in defiance of international law, I don't think there will be any move," Falhout said.

Syria has held sporadic peace talks with Israel since 1991, but they broke off without making any progress. No talks have taken place since Netanyahu took office in June 1996.

Syria wants Israel to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights, which Israel occupied in the 1967 Middle East war.

The assembly's duties include discussion and adoption of treaties and all accords affecting sovereignty, including peace agreements.

The constitution allows the parliament to conduct a vote of no confidence in the cabinet or any of its ministers, and to discuss government policies.

Falhout, a noted poet and writer, came to prominence in the 1960s as head of Syria's propaganda and news department and moved on to become editor of the daily paper Al Baath, the organ of the ruling party.

Later he headed Syria's official news agency before becoming the full-time head of the journalists' union.

Falhout is also deputy chairman of the Arab Writers' Union and head of the Damascus-based Arab Centre for Media and Development Research, and offshoot of the Arab League.

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Australian pays tribute to Bill Gates

SYDNEY (DPA) — Australian has changed his name to Bill Gates and set up a software firm called Microhard that he hopes will come to rival the one headed by the world's richest man, news reports Sunday said.

Gates, formerly known as Carl Anderson, is an exotic dancer and musician by profession but a software mogul by inclination. "I figure there will be some kind of association with Gate's Microsoft," he now I want to change Microhard a household name," Gates told Sydney's Sun-Herald newspaper.

say it's Bill Gates on Viagra."

Gates said he had changed his name to Bill Gates to pay tribute to the Microsoft founder.

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